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disques

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disques

FOR MARCH 1932

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HENRY
GATZ



RECORD supplements have become increasingly meagre of late. They look, in fact, almost like the record supplements of four and five years ago, when the so-called celebrity sections were far slimmer than they have been in the past two or three years. For some months now there has been a good deal of depressing talk about the difficulties and weighty problems that harrass the record industry; all sorts of gloomy prophecies have been made and all sorts of remedies—infallible ones, of course—proposed. But outside of the growing scarcity of good phonograph shops and the sizeable number of dealers who, discouraged with the record business and perplexed, moreover, with the strange names appearing on record labels and the still stranger sounds contained in the record grooves, have abandoned their record departments in favor of electrical refrigerators—outside of a few things like that, there has been, until fairly recently, very little external evidence showing that the industry is in so low and painful a state as has been pictured.

The record supplements have been as full of interesting things as ever (which is certainly not to say that they have been as full of as many interesting things as they should have

been), and indeed the casual observer, unfamiliar with the mysterious ways of record collectors and manufacturers, would hardly have suspected that anything was drastically wrong simply from glancing over the monthly broadsides. If things are really in such a mess, he might well ask, how is it that so many records are put out each month?

Recently, however, the supplements have become visibly thinner. Especially has this been noticeable in Europe, where ordinarily one turns for the most abundant and interesting lists. In England, for example, the phonograph flourishes as sin is rumored to in New York, and the English monthly supplements are generally filled with the stuff that makes the collector glow and palpitate and consult his bank balance. Early last Fall the number of releases in England, swelled to the bursting point by the special H. M. V. Connoisseur Catalogue, was as large as ever, and perhaps even a little larger. But since November there has been something closely resembling a let-down. In December a strange, an amazing thing happened. Only one album set was issued in England—the Columbia recording of the Dvorák Piano Quintet,—and the single-record releases were surely nothing extraordinary.

Even in America, where the phonograph, still ignored or held in suspicion by many of those who logically should appreciate it most, is not nearly so securely established as it is in England—even in America there has never—not, at any rate, since the inception of electrical recording—been so dull and barren a month. Not much recording of good music has been done in America during the past year or so (for which there are sufficiently convincing reasons), but the manufacturers have seen to it that plenty of good items from Europe have been repressed, and not infrequently, indeed, we have received European recordings long before they were issued in Europe. Naturally it is extremely regrettable that more recording isn't done in America. The art of recording has probably been brought to a higher state of development in this country than anywhere else in the world, and there is surely no shortage of competent artists now living in the United States, many of whom would be only too glad to record, and more than likely at a very modest fee. In this country far too much attention is paid to the idea, long since proved fallacious, that only "stars," artists with a widespread reputation, should be allowed to record. But that is another matter and will have to be discussed some other time. Those who are interested in the music first care little where the records come from—that, at most, is a purely secondary consideration,—so long as they are satisfactorily played and recorded.



There are, it need scarcely be said, plenty of plausible reasons for this momentary lull in the monthly flood of recorded music, and most of them are pretty obvious. The economic condition of the world, the vast quantity of music already recorded, and the difficulty in finding music that is likely to be successful—commercially successful—on records: these three reasons probably have as much to do with it as anything else.

But whatever the reason may be, it is hardly likely that anyone will seriously object to this brief—it is unthinkable that it can be anything else—breathing-spell in recording activities. Only a very wealthy person, indeed a fabulously wealthy person with tastes that embrace the whole field of music, could possibly have exhausted the contents of the various catalogues. Only an extremely wealthy person could possibly buy all the records that he would like to have in his collection. It is doubtful, in fact, if the average collector of moderate means has even one-tenth of the records he would like to see on his shelves. More, it takes a singularly good memory and considerable time to keep in one's head just what has and what has not been recorded. Probably every collector, looking over old catalogues or phonograph magazines, has unexpectedly come upon some attractive record the existence of which he never suspected. The thrill of discovery, indeed, is almost an every-day event with the record collector. In the past few years it has been very easy to miss outstanding records. In months crowded with notable releases, the average person could only reach out rather helplessly and haul in a few desirable records, while whole albums of fine things swept by, destined to be forgotten or at least only vaguely remembered as soon as the next month's supplements were issued.

In Europe the problem of keeping past releases fresh in the public mind has not been ignored by the manufacturers. For some months now the H. M. V. and

Columbia supplements have listed, in with the new releases, discs that were issued sometime ago, marked, of course, so that no one would mistake them for new recordings. This is a good idea, for fine records should have a somewhat longer life than a month and deserve infinitely more advertising promotion than can be obtained in a single supplement. The example of a prominent American book publisher, who has adopted the policy of re-publishing, every now and then, one of the outstanding books on his lists of a few years back, might, with some modification, be profitably followed by the record manufacturers. Out-of-date recordings, discs that are poorly recorded, would not, of course, be adapted for any such plan; but what about such early electrical recordings as the Philadelphia Orchestra's version of the Brahms First Symphony? Nearly five years old, the recording in that set is nonetheless certainly not appreciably inferior to the best we get these days, and it is no exaggeration to say that it is a good deal better than the average run of modern recordings. It must be admitted, however, that recordings like that are somewhat rare. And it is true that the seasoned collector is already familiar with those that do exist. But seasoned collectors are not the sole support of the phonograph industry. Since 1927, when the Brahms First was recorded, a good many music lovers have been added to the still much too small army of record collectors, and perhaps many of these newcomers do not realize that all good records need not necessarily have been made in the past year or so.

This magazine proposes, beginning with this issue, to devote at least one page each month to a section to be called Recorded Programs. The purpose of this department is not an impressively lofty one, nor are any great claims made for it. It will be included simply to call attention to some interesting records that have already been issued, records that might have been overlooked by some readers. No doubt there will be months when the majority of our readers will be familiar with every item issued; no doubt, too, there will be months when the items listed will appeal to only a few of our readers. But these are things that can't very well be helped. If the page succeeds every once in a while in bringing to somebody's attention a good record which he might otherwise have missed, something will have been accomplished. Between ten and twelve records—the approximate equivalent of the average program,—of all makes and types, will be chosen each month. Where two or more versions of an item exist the one that in our opinion is the superior will be listed. Only records that are satisfactorily played and recorded—in other words, records that would be given a favorable review if they were issued today—will be listed. Readers of *Disques* can help a great deal in making this department an alive and interesting feature if they will be so good as to send in suggestions. Preference, of course, will be given to those records that were issued before *Disques* started. *Disques* began in March, 1930, and naturally an enormous quantity of records came out prior to that date and hence have never been reviewed in these pages. But good records that have been neglected, even though they have been reviewed in these columns, will by no means be barred. This department also should serve as a kind of supplement to the two volumes of *Disques* that have been published. The indexes to these volumes (that to Volume II, completed with the February issue, is now available) list over 2000 compositions. That number includes a large proportion of the most important records available. It will be one of the purposes of this department to call attention to

those works that are not included in the indexes to Volumes I and II of *Disques*. In time, then, the owner of an unbroken file of this magazine should have a fairly complete list of the best recordings issued by all the companies.



In these times, when record supplements are somewhat sparse, things like the recently formed Hugo Wolf Society, which succeeded in obtaining the necessary five hundred subscribers a month or so back, have a particular value. Now comes the news that H. M. V., encouraged by the success of the Wolf Society, is forming a Beethoven Sonata Society along similar lines. This is likely to have a wider appeal than the Wolf, and in consequence the job of obtaining the needed subscribers should not be difficult. Private societies, formed with the sole purpose of issuing phonograph records of works that are likely to be passed over by the regular manufacturers, can do much toward increasing the value of the phonograph. It is therefore to be hoped that more will be formed and, what is just as important, that they will be generously supported.



R. D. DARRELL, who contributes the article "Wizard's Music" to this issue, was formerly editor of the *Phonograph Monthly Review* and has written widely on subjects of musical and phonographic interest.



HENRY C. PITZ, who contributes the frontispiece to this issue, is a well known illustrator, specializing on historical, medieval and legendary subjects. He recently won the Lloyd Griscom Prize at the American Water Color Society in New York, and he was awarded honorable mention for an etching at the Annual Ogunquit Exhibition, Ogunquit, Maine.

SUBSCRIPTIONS, INDEX AND BOUND VOLUMES

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CODE

The first letters in the record number indicate the manufacturer and all records are domestic releases unless the word **IMPORTED** appears directly under the number: B-Brunswick, C-Columbia, CH-Christschall, D-Decca, EB-Edison-Bell, FO-Fonotipia, G-National Gramophonic Society, HO-Homocord, O-Odeon, PA-Parlophon, PD-Polydor, R-Regal (English), and V-Victor.

American Operetta Comes of Age

Annotations Upon "Of Thee I Sing" and Its Merry Makers

By ISAAC GOLDBERG

It looks like a great year on Broadway for the Irish and the Jews. And, by that same token, like a great year for the American drama, light or serious. In a way it is a most astounding occurrence, and certainly a heartening one. Consider the simple facts. We have been accustomed to hearing the ever-recurrent statement that the American people do not care for art. Almost as frequently we have had it dinned into our ears that, since such things as plays and books are after all a luxury, they and the art for which they stand are the first to suffer in a period of depression. Yet the year that has just come to a close, disastrous as it was from the standpoint of economic maladjustment and world embroilments, has produced two of the most important dramatic entertainments in the history of the American stage. And despite the financial chaos, these works have been patronized so lavishly as to bring them into what is known as the "smash hit" class, thus achieving a financial parallel with their artistic status.

The serious play to which I refer is, of course, Eugene O'Neill's "Mourning Becomes Electra." It is not part of my present purpose to go into a discussion of this now famous trilogy. Nor is it important that O'Neill's trio of plays, fashioned after a Greek model, is not in my opinion a perfect masterpiece. Even O'Neill's failures are more important than the mean successes of lesser men. The nobility of his aims confers upon him something of that same tragic nobility which he would get into his characters. The light piece of which I wish mainly to speak is, from my point of view, just as important to the American stage and to American culture as O'Neill's trilogy,—perhaps, indeed, even more important than this tale of Greek doom transplanted to the austere atmosphere of Civil War New England, since O'Neill has already shown his characteristic qualities in plays essentially better than his "Electra." It is the work of four remarkable young gentlemen,—a satiric operetta entitled, "Of Thee I Sing."

Political satire set to music is not new in the history of the world. It goes back as far as Aristophanes, one of the Greeks whom O'Neill overlooked; it comes as far forward as Gilbert and Sullivan, and that high-spirited, infectiously jolly French Jew, Jacques Offenbach. It is really a pity that Offenbach is known in this country only for his "Tales of Hoffman." This is a most melodious score; we do not know, however, his comic operas, with their Gallic gaiety that not even Sullivan could often capture. And now, almost out of the blue, in "Of Thee I Sing" comes a satire of politics and love that combines the spirit of a Gilbert and Sullivan with the spirit of an Offenbach. We have had nothing like it in the history of our stage; after this event in our theatre musical comedy can never be the same. Over night, as it were, our musical stage, so long burdened by sentimental inanities, by childish plots, by hollow jingles, has come of age.

Ladies and gentlemen, meet Messrs. George S. Kaufman, Morrie Ryskind, Ira Gershwin and his brother, George. All of these fellows, for some years past, have been converging toward the production of just such a hilarious piece as is now drawing regiments of radiant spectators and auditors to the Music Box Theatre,

New York. In my book on George Gershwin, recently published, I finished by saying that if George Gershwin ever found a librettist who was worthy of his own high gifts, we should have at last a national comic opera. Hardly was the book off the press when along came "Of Thee I Sing" to fulfill, in great part, my prediction.

II

There had been a sort of preparation for this satirical salvo. Some of you may have attended a musical comedy entitled, "Strike Up the Band." Kaufman had a hand in this libretto, too, but with the obstinate integrity that characterizes this remarkable stage director, one of the foremost wits of our day, he withdrew from the piece when the managers began to transform it into just another musical comedy. At that, it remains one of the best satirical pieces that preceded "Of Thee I Sing." In the preparation of the latter production Kaufman was given, by Sam H. Harris, the producer, an absolutely free hand. There was no one now to tell him that "we need another hot number in this scene or else our customers will begin to be bored," or "Better bring the girls on at this juncture, for the tired business men will be getting tired again around 10:15."

Kaufman has already done long and valiant service to our lighter stage, which some solemn persons mistakenly consider beneath our serious stage in importance. He has brought the healing of intelligent laughter, directed not in poisoned malice against individuals but rather in sharp, but good-natured fun against personal and social foibles. You will remember his essential share as collaborator in such pronounced successes as "Beggar On Horseback," "The Royal Family," "Dulcy," and "Once In A Lifetime." What O'Neill is to our drama of the tears of things, Kaufman is to our drama of laughter. The one is our tragic mask; the other, our comic. It is not the first time that the Irish and the Jews have been paired in boldness of conception, originality of execution and a dedication to intellectual freedom.



Kaufman has a high esteem for his present collaborator, Ryskind. Ryskind came to prominence during the late war when he was expelled from Columbia University for his pacifist notions. The other day, by an irony that Ryskind was the first to appreciate, Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia University shared with Jane Addams the award of the Nobel Peace Prize. Ryskind has collaborated with Kaufman before, particularly in providing vehicles for the Marx Brothers.

In "Of Thee I Sing" there are three elements which fuse admirably into one: the libretto, the verses and the music. Let us consider these in turn. The book of the action deals with the refusal of the candidate for the Presidency of the United States to marry Miss White House, who has been chosen for the distinction by a nation-wide contest that assembles the most successful beauties at Atlantic

City for the final choice. Instead, he falls in love at first sight with Mary Turner, a maiden of beautiful simplicity who can bake the best corn muffins in the land. Suddenly it appears that the rejected winner of the contest, Diana Devereaux, is of French descent; through the French Ambassador France demands justice, under threat of severing diplomatic relations. This is averted when the Vice President, one of the most original rôles that has ever been devised for the modern comic stage, discovers that it is his duty to assume any obligations which the President is unable to fulfill. Not only does Mr. V. P. get a beauty—the poor fellow has been yearning for one all through the piece—but France's honor is satisfied.

So told, the plot sounds ordinary. For it is the detail that not only lends surprising unity to the action, but provides it with so many laughable incidents that one departs from the spectacle almost weak with too much enjoyment. Two of the scenes—that of the Madison Square election rally in Act I, and the meeting of the United States Senate in Act II—stand for their peculiar excellency alone. With several strokes of well aimed travesty the Madison Square scene simply debunks the pretences of our political life; the Senate scene is likewise a howlingly sardonic treatment of the Congressional Record. Truth mingled with absurdity forms an irresistible combination.

III

Bold rhymes and a skilful music that underscores the narrative provide likewise a sanative commingling of radiant lunacy with home truths. Ira Gershwin was never happier with his conceits and jingles, to which brother George has written a score that travesties music in terms of music itself. It is a delightful shock when, for the first time, the Presidential candidate, who is touring the country with his sweetheart on a platform of Love In the White House, sings the theme song of the campaign:

Of Thee I Sing, *ba-by!*

It begins as a National anthem; the sudden twist, with that *ba-by*, turns it into a parody of Tin Pan Alley. Ira's verses are not only clever in themselves; they fulfill what should be the function of all operatic verse, whether grand or light,—they elucidate and advance the story. Consider a couple of examples: the girls, for instance, singing of their chances at the Atlantic City finals:

If a girl is sexy,
She may be Mrs. Prexy.

Or again,

The prize is consequential,
Pres-i-den-tial . . .

Let me, out of long experience with librettos, assure you that this is by no means as easy as it looks. In the Senate scene we have really an operetta by itself in which the collaborators ride at the top of their bent. There has been nothing like this in comic opera since that glorious evening in 1875 when Gilbert and Sullivan disclosed "Trial By Jury" to a delighted London public. The gaiety of this self-same scene is to be matched only by certain scenes in Offenbach or in Gilbert and Sullivan's "Iolanthe."

The score abounds in felicitous touches. There is, in Act I, the *finaletto* in which the candidate for President glorifies his American girl for her culinary skill. Not only is this well aimed satire (in this scene the lyricist achieves the feat of rhyming "quinces" with good old-fashioned "blintzes"*) ; it is excellent serio-comic music,—a sort of audible eye-winking at which George Gershwin is expert. Gershwin, even in his music for the symphony orchestra, is a wit. It was Beaumarchais who wrote that what cannot be said can be sung. The wit and melody and sound musicianship of Gershwin's score lie like a salve over the pertinent jibes that Kaufman and Ryskind have provided.



"Of Thee I Sing" has one of the finest openings that I can remember in a play of like appeal. It is, on the part of all concerned, a masterstroke, representing a political torch-light procession. It takes about five minutes, with its illuminated signs, its appeal for votes to the Irish and the Jews, its musical *mélange* of election slogans. At once it establishes, almost dangerously, the mood of what is to follow. Yet, unbelievably enough, the action is a steady crescendo to the final curtain, when we are treated to a glorification of American motherhood (twins: a boy and a girl) such as should bring tears of envy to the originator of Mother's Day.

I must revert to the rôle of Alexander Throttlebottom, the Vice President, who provides such a marked contrast to President John P. Wintergreen. Throughout the play nobody can remember him or his name, not even the man who nominated him at the convention. In order to gain admission into the White House he is compelled to patronize a special tour of the premises. In the end he himself all but forgets his name. This conception is really an inspiration. Quickly, before you can ransack your memory, try to name a few Vice Presidents of your country or a few Lieutenant Governors of your State. Need I say more?

IV

"Of Thee I Sing" suggests a new art-form for a new, a sophisticated, a courageous, a laughing America.

Kaufman and Ryskind could have made it, with many necessary alterations, into a straight play. But they were wise to conceive it as a musical extravaganza; music is excellent for holding such tonic absurdity in solution. Time and again

* This isn't the only Yiddish in the operetta. The obscure Vice President recommends his obscure boarding-house for its Kosher cooking. And in a pseudo French chorus there is the cryptic line, "A vous toot dir vay, a vous," which means, in Judeo-German, "Where does it hurt you?"

Gershwin's music points, heightens and sustains this absurdity. Consider again the opening political procession. Not only does it strike the right note at once, with its parodies and its spirit; at the same time it is musicianly to the very last sound. It is excellent musical humor, moreover. Recall the line, "Loves the Irish and the Jews." Well, the music has a spirit both Irish and Jewish. ("Winter-green for President" is almost Khassidic in its minor appeal.) The shifting of keys, with the vocal emphasis landing on a note announcing a new modulation, is fine fun and fine writing . . . This is but one of a whole group of felicities. Take the finaletto about the corn muffins; this, like the Senate scene, is a comic



operetta in miniature; the melodic line is soft, with a mock-heroic reference; the use of three melodies, contrapuntally, adds humor to the situation by treating the absurdity to sober musical development . . . Take the entrance of the nine supreme court judges: George has them count themselves out to a whole-tone scale; at the end, when this counting-line is repeated, the tempo is doubled with excellent effect . . . This is humor *in tones* . . . His use of recitative, brief as it is, could well be tried by composers of "serious" opera. That snatch about "the most beautiful blossom in all the Southland," with the Debussyan chords that speak of her castles coming tumbling down, is again fun *in tones* . . . The "vamp till ready" chords with which the Senate scene begins,—again this type of essentially musical humor . . . The street-corner-quartet "Whereases," ditto . . . I maintain that no other American composer has yet displayed this feeling for comicality in the tones themselves . . . You will notice that, thus far, I have made no mention of melodies or songs. I have been emphasizing the tonal values purely . . . The rest of the operetta abounds in happy touches . . . Let me recall a few: the theme-song is firmly constructed,—real composing, not the vaporings of an idle troubadour. If you examine even the printed sheets you will discover that the harmonization is very careful, with a definite musical reason for every note; it is, indeed, most careful in the inner voices. And this, to me, is the least interesting song in the score. "Who Cares,"—to name now the printed selections,—has a beautiful melodic contour, alternating the gentle line that Gershwin learned from Kern with a subtle syncopation. Notice, in the verse, not only the injection of the Charleston rhythm into the accompaniment, but the changes to unrelated keys. "Because, Because": fine rhythms, and a charming gaiety that only Kern and Gershwin can give us today. Herbert—who wrote some fine tunes in his day—never had this soft subtlety. George's accompaniments, in these tunes, are well worthy of close attention. There is nothing perfunctory. "Love Is Sweeping the Country": one peach of a tune, harmonized with enviable skill; the shifting from major to minor (not to speak of the sturdy rhythms) at the words

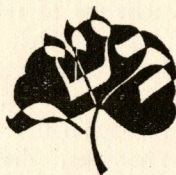
Feels that passion'll
Soon be national.

is a typical Gershwin "find" . . . As for the unprinted music, it teems with happy touches. The entire Senate scene gathers effect from the music. The swing of the "illegitimate" French tune; the two waltzes, in succession; first, the "Jilted" number, with its sentimental line, and then the quasi-Viennese "I'm about to be a mother," with its descents of a minor or major octave at the important words; the Salvation Army take-off in the posterity number. Is there, in American musical comedy, a scene that equals it for gusto, for tonal eye-winking and nose-thumbing? . . . The finale of the second act has some exquisite modal harmonies in the Irish fashion (remember that Wintergreen loves the Irish and the Jews) . . . Time and again the composer—and I include Ira for rhymes that can't be dug out of dictionaries—is as felicitous as Sullivan and Offenbach. Not only does this sound good; it bears scrutiny in the study.

Of Thee We Sing, "Of Thee I Sing"!

THE RECORDS

Thus far only three records—all played by dance orchestras—from "Of Thee I Sing" have been issued. Victor 22911, played by Victor Arden-Phil Ohman and Their Orchestra contains "Of Thee I Sing" and "Who Cares." The same selections are played by the Knickerbockers on C-2598. A twelve-inch record (B-20103) contains a dance medley from the operetta played by Abe Lyman and His California Orchestra. The numbers included are "Of Thee I Sing," "Who Cares," and "Love Is Sweeping the Country."



Wizard's Music

By R. D. DARRELL

*. . . the case presents
No adjunct to the muse's diadem.*

—EZRA POUND.

The majority of Edison's major inventions were basic, romantically simple and revolutionary, keystones of tremendous industries whose activities are part and parcel of our modern world. The tale of their creation is familiar to every school-boy, a glowing saga of purest Americana.

But there was an Edison the manufacturer as well as an Edison the inventor. And his most important manufacturing phase brought him in close contact with an art, that of music. For nearly fifty years his phonographs and records entered into the lives of literally millions, leaving their mark on the cultural development of Wall Street clerk and Oregon lumberjack. The fragile black cylinders and discs have left their impress on the ears and minds of our generation no less deeply than the electric light has stamped its print upon our physical selves. No historian of our times can pass over this marriage of the machine and the muse. No artist can ignore its blood strain in his consciousness and that of his audience.

The shaping of our inner world of tonal sensibility and emotional growth may be less apparent than the obvious alteration of our outer world, but it is nonetheless real and powerful. And it, too, is analyzable, although one will get scant help from the logical source, the musical gentry. Talk to a musician concerning the cultural influence of the Edison phonograph and you will get none of the crisp information technicians will furnish you in response to an inquiry regarding the scientific fertility of Edison's discoveries.

The sentimentalists among them will prate of magical rosewood boxes and the imprisoned genii of voices of the past, even to the mouthing of Haff's ecstatic ode,

He gave it the organ's mighty throb,
And the choir's hushed Amen—
Oh, wondrous jewel, fairest of all,
In Edison's diadem.

The more hard-boiled will speak bitterly, but as vaguely, of the mechanization of the purest art. Few will give you even such obvious facts as that Edison phonographs and records are no longer made, or that the phonograph in use today is not his but a development of Berliner's gramophone and the Maxfield-Harrison electrical processes of recording and reproduction.

The only source of accurate and pertinent information is to be found in Edison's own catalogues (now out of print), the lists of records which he issued in mass production. Comparing the menus he offered to music-hungry millions with such progress as has been observable during the last generation, we can draw our own conclusions regarding Edison's contributions to musical advancement.

Although Edison's phonograph activities covered half a century, the period an art historian must study most closely is confined to some fifteen years from the introduction of "Diamond Disc" phonographs and "Re-Creations" around 1914 to the abandonment of recording near the end of 1929.

Edison's tinfoil phonograph of 1877 was a crude toy, the first instrument to reproduce sound, but restricted to a distorted echo of speech and unaccompanied song. The nursery ditties furnishing the bulk of its recording material were a fair index to its artistic stature. Its practical possibilities seemed limited to the functions of dictation and as an adjunct to the nascent telephone. The improved phonograph of 1888, based partly on the Bell-Tainter graphophone, revealed new potentialities, and in 1891 Edison realized that "through the faculty with which it stores up and reproduces music of all sorts, or whistling and recitations, it can be employed to furnish constant amusements to invalids, or to social assemblies, at receptions, dinners, etc."

This prophecy formulated the policy of the next two decades' exploitation of Edison's cylinder phonograph records. Sentimental and sacred songs, band and salon orchestral novelties, dance music, whistling solos, comic recitations, and a like order of vaudeville entertainment made up Edison's catalogues prior to 1914. Not unnaturally the phonograph was in considerable disrepute as a musical instrument, although it satisfactorily pandered to mob tastes in much the same way as the radio does today.

II

Despite the lively business done by Edison factories, his rivals—manufacturing discs recorded by a process quite dissimilar from Edison's "hill and dale" recording—were outstripping him in technical improvements and in varied extent of recorded fare. The majority of contemporary disc records contained exactly the same sort of sonal skits as Edison's cylinders; indeed they were often recorded by the same performers. But there was a growing leaven of more significant material. And under flossy scarlet and gold labels were names of more than passing renown: Patti, Melba, Lehmann, Bernhardt, Calvé, Caruso, Plançon, Sembrich, Nikisch, and many others.

Realizing that his cylinder machines and records were fast becoming antiquated, Edison set to devising improved media,—the "diamond disc re-creations." He engaged a number of first rate artists and dared even to compare their actual performances on the same stage with the recorded replicas. Technically, his equality if not superiority to other phonograph manufacturers was reestablished. Within a few years he had built up a record catalogue larger than any other of its time. It is this catalogue that itemizes Edison's musical legacy.

The last general catalogue issued is undated but ascribable to late 1925 or early 1926. It runs to over 550 pages of fine print and is unaugmented by the usual composer and celebrity artist cross indices. The lack of reference by composers makes it difficult to check up on the serious works, but that repertory is small enough to unearth with reasonable completeness.

In brief summary:

Discs in the lower—"popular"—price ranges are essentially a duplication of the old cylinder catalogues. Some of the classified lists give an idea of the nature and extent of the material.

Dance records, thirty pages.

Vocal duets, fifteen.

Band records, ten and one-half.

Sacred records, ten.

Vocal quartets, seven.

Instrumental medleys, five.

Vaudeville records, Irish records, and Negro melodies, three and one-half each.

Hawaiian records, three.

Accordion, banjo, xylophone, and rural records, one each.

Turning to celebrity records there is promise of better things from artists of the calibre of Destinn, Hempel, Case, Teyte, Bori, Matzenauer, Elisabeth Schumann, Bonci, Zenatello, Rachmaninoff, Spalding, Flesch, Schmitz, Maréchal, *et al.*, but their output is discouraging.

From some ninety-five operas represented the bulk of the arias is drawn from the most hackneyed Italian and French repertoires. There are few Wagnerian excerpts; few or none from modern operas.

Lieder are almost non-existent.

The lists of instrumental solos (violin, six pages; piano, four, etc.) are confined with very rare exceptions to moth-eaten quasi-popular and encore pieces.

There is very little true chamber music, as the five and one-half pages of instrumental ensemble records are made up almost entirely of transcriptions.

No sonatas complete and but few isolated movements. (Excerpts from 'cello and accordion sonatas, an undesignated section of the "Moonlight" played by the "Bellini Unique Ensemble," the air and variations from a Mozart sonata in A played by Rachmaninoff.)

No trios or movements of trios from the standard repertory.

No string quartets. Isolated movements: a Haydn *andante cantabile*, a Boccherini menuet, and an Ippolitow-Iwanow intermezzo.

No quintets or sextets.

Among orchestral records (nine and one-half pages), through which the most promising work in musical appreciation has been achieved in recent years, there is a great preponderance of light concert warhorses and saccharine trifles.

No symphony complete. Beyond the *largo* from Dvorák's *New World* Symphony there are no isolated movements.

The "American" symphony and concert orchestras, synthetic studio organizations playing under unspecified conductors, proffer a few important overtures: *Freischütz*, *Coriolanus*, *Lenora No. 3*, *Tannhäuser*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Meistersinger* (catalogued under "Die"), and *Fingal's Cave*. Several others are available in band transcriptions.

Practically all the larger works mentioned are recorded in "cut" versions. Except for Rachmaninoff's recording of the Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2* (three record sides), there seems to be no work extending beyond the limits of a single double-sided disc.

In short, titans like Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms are rep-

resented only by a few sparks from their anvils. One searches in vain for mention of pre-classical, Elizabethan, or modern composers of any serious standing.

III

Now the 1926 catalogues of other recording companies were not exactly unfathomable treasure mines of music, but the diligent seeker could find a great deal more to arouse his interest than what Edison offered. Stokowski, Toscanini, Mengelberg, Muck, the Flonzaleys, *et al.*, recorded a few important works among their many pot-boilers. And it was just about this time that Schubert's *Unfinished* Symphony, Schumann's E Flat Quintet (cut), Stravinsky's *Fire Bird* Suite, and the complete Dvorák *New World* Symphony were released by Victor. More significant still were the extensive series of Columbia, Odeon and Victor re-pressings of foreign recordings, including many symphonies, tone poems, chamber works and a long list of Wagnerian excerpts. Several operas were available practically in their entirety.

Many musically minded observers felt that Edison recording and reproduction were superior to any others of the time, and they were not backward in drawing Edison's attention to the scarcity of serious fare available from his company. Compton Mackenzie (who founded in 1923 the first non-trade magazine devoted entirely to recorded music—the *Gramophone*) waxed enthusiastic over Edison's media, but pointed out that they had no future unless they were able to purvey good music in addition to well recorded music. The remark must have come to Edison's attention, for he shipped one of his latest phonographs and many records to Mr. Mackenzie, who naturally found on scrutiny of the gifts no reason for modifying his first opinion.

Early in 1926 a British record collector living in Hong Kong reported to the *Gramophone* that he had written Edison bemoaning the lack of significant recordings. Edison himself had replied, announcing that the people in America did not want good music. The reproduction of operatic and symphonic music did not represent a sound commercial proposition—in America. Since the great Metropolitan Opera Company showed a huge annual deficit, how could operatic recordings be expected to pay their own way? However, for the sake of the prestige of his company and the advancement of musical appreciation, he was preparing a series of "masterworks," the first of which—the "Moonlight" Sonata—was already recorded. But the moonlight never shone, and the library was not begun until two years later, in February, 1928, when Edison issued his first major recordings, Dvorák's *American* Quartet played by the Philharmonic String Quartet, and Schumann's E Flat Quintet by the same group and E. Robert Schmitz, pianist. Both were competent performances, albeit in abbreviated form.

By this time the rest of the industry had wholeheartedly taken up electrical recording and reproduction, introduced in 1925, and a phonographic renaissance was in full flower. Operas, symphonies, tone poems, suites, chamber music, recorded in complete form both here and abroad, were released in a steady flood. The Beethoven centennial in 1927 was celebrated by the recording of scores of his works, not only the nine symphonies and most of the quartets, but many less well known compositions seldom heard in the concert hall. Columbia's courageous propagation of works of contemporary composers, begun several years earlier with

recordings of Delius, Holst, Vaughn Williams and others, was taken up enthusiastically. Soon not only contemporary "classics" like the works of Debussy, Strauss and Elgar were being issued, but more daring compositions of Stravinsky, Scriabin, Hindemith, Ravel, Bartok, Bax and many more.

Edison, his technical supremacy totally destroyed, his musical policy out-moded, endeavored frantically to perfect an electrically recorded "re-creation" that could cope with the brilliance and volume of the "Orthophonic," "Light Ray," and "Viva Tonal" discs now sweeping the market. His most ambitious effort, a long-playing record, proved a fiasco, nor was its failure lamented, for it offered only stale musical fare, dinner music programs, *Aida* and *Carmen* selections, "memories" of Victor Herbert, and the like, apparently mostly re-recorded from older "re-creations." The market for the old Edison products seemed entirely lost, and ruefully abandoning his "hill and dale" recording, he went over to the manufacture of electrical needle style records. A few of these appeared in 1929, notably the first recording of Maurice Rosenthal—four Chopin preludes and two études—and a superb performance of the Haydn Quartet in C, Op. 33, No. 3, by the Roth String Quartet. Spalding, Martinelli and several others made some of the new records, but only of trifles. It was Edison's last musical effort. Before the end of the year the whole phonographic business, lock, stock and barrel, was abruptly and permanently discontinued.

IV

Undoubtedly Edison's recorded legacy reflected the average uncultivated musical tastes of his time, but even with the kindest intention in the world it is hard to see where he made the slightest effort to appeal to thousands of record buyers of tastes even slightly above the average, or to put a shoulder to the wheel of mass musical appreciation. His faith in the commercial impracticability of the higher types of recorded music was shared by many other manufacturers, but they discovered that their tentative ventures into album set recording for the musically literate were successful and they were not slow in capitalizing that discovery. As a result the phonograph attracted a host of new supporters and demonstrated that it was not to be rendered extinct by the radio. In many instances, to be sure, large scale recordings were—and still are—issued at small or no profit, but their publication was rightly considered a legitimate and honorable outlay.

We should not expect a great love or understanding of music from a man so technically minded as the Wizard of Menlo Park. Naturally the scientific facets of the art alone commanded his interest. His biographers often attempt to foist an assumed admiration for the classics on him, but Edison himself was franker. In response to a questionnaire in the *Musician* (January, 1927) he candidly admitted that his favorite compositions were heart-songs of the type of *The Sweetest Story Ever Told* and *Kathleen Mavourneen*.^{*} But as a manufacturer, as a

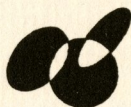
^{*}In a pamphlet, "What Edison Likes in Music," put out in the hey-day of the "Re-Creations," Edison described his musical tastes in considerable detail. Characteristic quotations: "I am able to hear minute overtones, which are so small that they cannot be seen through a microscope, unless it is specially equipped." "Excessive use of dissonances by some composers struck me as being very objectionable . . . dissonance has its uses in the development of a musical theme, and, if properly employed, tends to enlarge the scope of musical expression, but dissonance, merely for the sake of dissonance, impressed me as a debased form of

purveyor of music to the homes of impressible millions, anxious to be entertained rather than edified but nonetheless susceptible of artistic development, personal taste should have played a very minor part in the selection of material for recording. And if incalculable numbers looked to him for vaudeville turns and dance music there were sincere thousands who looked hopefully and vainly to him for more nourishing spiritual food.

It is ironical, but perhaps characteristically American, that the genius which brought so brilliant an illumination to our exterior world contributed no spark to the lighting of the inner world, spoke only to the sentiments and never to the sensibilities, left so barren an offering on the shrine of the fairest muse.

composition, and I wondered how anyone could like music of that character." ". . . music is either soothing, stimulating, or boresome." "The so-called high culture in music frequently manifests itself by a blasé attitude toward many things that are truly beautiful."

Out of his twenty-five favorite "Re-Creations," considered the finest that had been put out by the Edison Laboratories, Edison thought six should be in every collection: the Schubert-Wilhelmj *Ave Maria*, the *William Tell* Overture (band transcription), Saint-Saëns' *Rondo Capriccioso*, Losey's *Forest Whispers*, *Kathleen Mavourneen*, and "Depuis le jour" from *Louise*. Other pieces included in the list of twenty-five were: Mrs. Belcher's *Ain't You Coming Out Tonight*, Gutmann's *Memories of Home*, Von Tilzer's *In the Evening*, *By the Moonlight*, and Edison's best-liked song, played by request at his funeral services, *I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen*.



Bruckner and Mahler

By DAVID EWEN

One is, at last, beginning to notice a rapidly growing consciousness in America for the music of Anton Bruckner and Gustav Mahler, those two musical enigmas of the past century. Perspective is giving us a new viewpoint and, from the distance of several decades, we are beginning to perceive genuine value in the musical outpourings of these two much-discussed, much fought-over, and certainly much-neglected German musicians. Performances of Bruckner and Mahler have grown more and more numerous during the past two seasons throughout the entire country—so much so that America has already had the opportunity to hear some of their most pretentious and outstanding works. What have these recent performances of their music taught us about the ultimate value of Bruckner and Mahler in music?



1824 - 1896

In the case of Bruckner's music, one must be careful at all times to sift the gold from the dross. I know of no other composer who could, with the same stroke of the pen, create such fine lines and so many scratches. Perhaps the most apparent shortcoming of Bruckner is his bombast. His orchestral works are cluttered with empty passages for shrieking trumpets and rumbling tympani which stab at grandioseness but which, in truth, are only so much sound and fury; his choral works are filled with endless musical padding. His symphonies, all too frequently, are inflated with musical wind: it requires only the slightest prick of any critical pen to completely deflate them.

And yet, in rare moments, when Bruckner forgets his arrogant postures, he has attained a poignancy uniquely his own. It almost seems that, in such movements, the pen flies out of his hand and is driven by some inexplicable force—so different does the music suddenly become. One recalls his celebrated Mass in F Minor. Although on the one hand the drama of the Gloria and the Credo is nothing short of pusillanimous, with its amateurish padding of scales and its still more amateurish empty-winded climaxes, yet, every once in a while, Bruckner rises high above such shortcomings. There are moments in this work when Bruckner searches deeply into his religious heart, and then unaffectedly attempts to express in tone what he has found there. It was at such moments that he composed the quiet majesty of the Kyrie, the heart-breaking pathos of the Et Incarnatus and Agnus Dei, and the exalted serenity of the Benedictus.

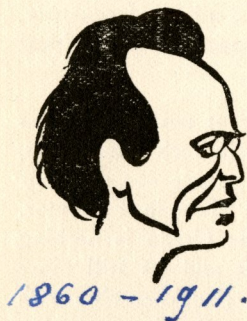
It is in his nine symphonies, however, that Bruckner's greatest strength lies. If one can listen to the weaker pages with a tolerant ear, one is soon enough rewarded by passages that dangerously skirt sublimity. Sublimity is the precise word to characterize the philosophic peace and the meditative calm which permeate the slow section of the Fourth Symphony, for example. Sublimity, too, most aptly characterizes the highest peaks of the Seventh Symphony—certainly his greatest work. There is that superb opening, here, full of sunshine and brilliance; there

is the tender pathos of the slow movement; there is the demoniac energy that sweeps through the closing section of the final movement—all of which clearly tell us that the voice that sings such music is an original voice in music.

The Seventh Symphony* characterizes most aptly, perhaps, Bruckner's symphonic style. Here we find the broad classic melodies which sweep through twenty bars, often, before pausing to catch a breath: Bruckner could never think in the terse, epigrammatic phrases of Bach, for example. This expansiveness of melody gives all of his symphonies something of the epic quality which they undoubtedly possess. This epic quality is further accentuated by the richness of the harmonic garb, in which all of the melodies are dressed, and in which Bruckner's inventiveness seems almost to be inexhaustible; the vast outlines of his symphonic mould; and, finally, by the monumental developments which transform his melodies into colossal tonal labyrinths.

But those who are now hearing Bruckner for the first time will not only be attracted to the epical scope of his symphonies, but also to the serenity and tenderness of his more contemplative moments. Though there are bad pages in Bruckner's music, there are also pages which speak of a beauty with which we are altogether unfamiliar. For that beauty alone, Bruckner is well worth rediscovering. And so, though there is much blundering in Bruckner's music, we must forgive it for, though he may take a circuitous route, Bruckner more than once blunders into greatness.

II



If Bruckner's music is generally characterized by its peculiar blending of good and bad music, Mahler's works are marked by their prolixity. Just as bombast is Bruckner's greatest fault, so does Mahler suffer from musical garrulousness. His music is too prolix. Effects lose some of their sting, eloquence begins to grow wan, beauty becomes diluted, because the music continues long after it had reached its logical conclusion. That was Mahler's great sin. It is the sin which has made his music so unpopular to the masses, and which has deafened so many discerning ears to it; it is the sin which has prevented his becoming the logical and inevitable successor to Brahms.

One acknowledges this defect. And yet Mahler *was* the nearest approach to immortal greatness since Brahms. Never did he resort to musical clichés; cheapness, in even the most negligible passages, most certainly was never one of his characteristics as a composer. He composed music for the most part on a high plane of eloquence. It had originality, depth and shading. His orchestration is still many years ahead of our time. His harmonic inventiveness was inexhaustible. And he had a mature, often profound, vision. There is a depth of expressiveness in his symphonies which no composer before his time—not even Beethoven in his

* SYMPHONY No. 7 IN E. Fourteen sides. Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Jascha Horenstein. Seven 12-inch discs (PD-66802 to PD-66808) in album. \$10.50.

last quartets—or after him has equalled. True, philosophic ideas simply cannot find apt expression in tones—and Mahler more than once futilely attempted to make his music speak abstract concepts and ideas. Yet one feels, in listening to Mahler's music, that there is something here which is infinitely more than mere beautiful sound, that there is something here which makes music far more plastic than it has ever been, that there is something here which has succeeded in making the power of music to express ideas wider in scope. The Second Symphony—that magnificent interpretation of a hero who pathetically fails in his ideal to learn the meaning of life—immediately heralded a new, authentic personality in music. This music had original fingerprints; nothing quite like it had been heard before.

In his succeeding symphonies, the attempt to express grandiose themes in tone becomes more and more apparent. The Third Symphony is to Nature, not the exuberant, bubbling happiness of a poet in the presence of Nature's beauties such as is Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony, but rather the outcry of a pantheist who seeks to know the inherent meaning of Nature, who seeks to understand its mysterious power, and who kneels before its inexplicable Force. The Fifth Symphony is to death, one of the most magnificent threnodies in music. But though tragedy drenches this music, there is here a note of optimism. It is as though Mahler suggested in his music that death is not the end but that there exists a beyond where the soul persists. The Eighth Symphony speaks of man's Faustian pursuit for happiness, a pursuit which, to be sure, never reaches culmination. And the Ninth Symphony, his last, is aptly enough a docile resignation to Fate.

Perhaps the summit of Gustav Mahler's genius is *Das Lied von der Erde*, a song cycle for tenor, alto and orchestra based on verses from the Chinese. There is in this music the dignity of sorrow such as rarely has found expression in music. *Das Lied* contains no wild tearing of hair, no raucous cries of futility, no shrieks of mawkish Tschaiowsky violins with harp *glissandos*. In *Das Lied*, it is merely the supreme pathos of the slight lowering of the head and the twitching of the lips. It is the suffering of a man who is brave, and who suffers in heart alone. It is the suffering of a man who finds himself in an alien world which he cannot understand and which cannot understand him. But it is a philosophic, quiet, introspective suffering. The harmonies are muffled; the melodies are simple, broad and pathetic; the rhythms sweep. Mahler had once and for all expressed in music that which had for so many years been in his heart: his suffering in the face of a world's indifference to and misunderstanding of his great life's work.

III

I do not deny the faults in the music of both Bruckner and Mahler when I champion it. I realize its weakness, and regret it. But for all its weakness, there is much in their works to compel admiration and awe. Bruckner and Mahler had both a touch of genius in them, and their music at its best, too, had a touch of the infinite.

We must forget the faults for the sake of the wealth which their music yields at its richest moments. Fortunately, the concert halls are beginning to recognize Bruckner and Mahler—and more and more musicians are beginning to hear their music with new ears. Can the phonograph now be far behind?

Recorded Programs

[Such a vast quantity of good music is now available for the phonograph that quite frequently records of more than ordinary merit are overlooked. It will be the purpose of this page to call attention to such records. Readers are invited to send in their suggestions. Records which appeared prior to the appearance of Disques and hence have never been reviewed in these pages will be given preference. All types and makes will be considered, and an effort will be made to avoid the hackneyed and excessively familiar.]

SCHUMANN

"Manfred," Overture and Entr'acte Music

Symphony Orchestra conducted by Max von Schillings.

[Two 12-inch discs (O-5183 and O-5184). \$1.50 each.]

Schumann wrote two dramatic works intended for the theatre: the opera of *Genoveva* and the music to Byron's *Manfred*. This latter consists of an overture, an entr'acte and several solos and choruses—all in all sixteen numbers. "The music hardly ever serves to intensify the dramatic effects," Grove's says, "and yet this is all that is necessary in a drama. It appears rather to be the outcome of the impression produced on Schumann by Byron's poem." But Grove's later on denies that it is an inferior work and goes so far as to assert that it is "a splendid creation, and one of Schumann's most inspired productions." Only the Overture and Entr'acte Music are recorded here, but they were well worth doing, for we seldom have an opportunity to hear this music today in the concert hall. Issued nearly three years ago, just before Odeon discontinued its red and blue label records in this country, the discs are competently played, and the recording is very good. The Entr'acte Music, in particular, is attractive.

MOZART

Symphony No. 34 in C Major (K. 338)

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Thomas Beecham.

[Three 12-inch discs in album. Columbia Set No. 123. \$4.50.]

This set, along with Toscanini's recording of Haydn's *Clock* Symphony, was singled out by Lawrence Gilman for discussion in his article, "Music's New Gateways," which made such a stir when it was published several years ago. "If, now, the investigator plays the Columbia record of Sir Thomas Beecham's admirable performance of Mozart's C major Symphony," Mr. Gilman said ". . . he will surely be detained by the beauty and transparency of the tone in the slow movement (scored for strings and bassoons), and by the fidelity with which the traits of Sir Thomas' memorable reading—its subtlety of nuance, its fine taste in phrasing, its dynamic sensibility—have been fixed."

RIMSKY-KORSAKOW

"Maynight" Overture

London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Albert Coates.

[One 12-inch disc (V-D1744). \$2.]

This is an admirable performance of one of the less frequently heard Rimsky-Korsakow orchestral pieces.

BORODIN

Quartet in D Major

Poltronieri String Quartet.

[Three 12-inch discs (C-D14633 to C-D14635). \$2 each.]

The Russian "Five" left very little chamber music. Borodin, however, wrote several string quartets, of which this is probably the most popular. The Nocturne, of course, is well known, and there are plenty of recorded versions of it, but the other movements are equally beautiful, though comparatively unfamiliar. Here they are competently played and finely recorded.

ORCHESTRA



SCHUBERT DVORÁK

V-EJ664

to

V-EJ666

IMPORTED

SYMPHONY NO. 5 in *B Flat Major*. (Schubert) Five sides
and

SLAVONIC DANCE, Op. 46, No. 4. (Dvorák) One side.
Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech.
Three 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 91.

This symphony has been done electrically only once before—by Jascha Horenstein and the Berlin Philharmonic in a version sponsored by Polydor. The set (reviewed in *Disques* for August, 1930) was a good one, capably played and skilfully recorded, but somehow it never seemed to achieve much popularity, and Brunswick has not thus far repressed it. It is true that the Symphony No. 5 is not one of Schubert's major works, that it falls below the level of the *Unfinished* and C Major Symphonies; but it is by no means without distinction, charm and grace. An earlier work than the B Minor and C Major Symphonies, it is constructed on much lighter and less impressive lines. It lacks the sweep and depth and passion of the later works, and the orchestration, moreover, though charming, is much simpler (the work is scored, in fact, only for strings, one flute, two oboes, two bassoons and two horns). Though there are passages clearly showing the influences of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, these influences are not sufficiently strong to overshadow Schubert's own contributions; there are things in the symphony that could hardly have been written by anyone else. It is full of graceful melodies, melodies that are unfailingly enchanting and beautiful and that are genuinely Schubertian in character.

Schubert started work on the piece in September, 1816, when he was scarcely twenty years old, and the symphony was completed in October of the same year. It was first performed in the home of Otto Hadwig, a member of the Burgtheatre's orchestra. The performers were amateur musicians who took part in the concerts held at the home of Schubert's father. Dr. Blech, who several years ago recorded the great C Major Symphony with, for that time, singularly felicitous results, gives the work an extremely lively and brisk performance. The recording is as full of life as the reading . . . The Dvorák *Slavonic Dance*, Op. 46, No. 4, seems to be new to records—at least, this is the first recording of it that the reviewer has come upon. Full of color and high spirits, it is immensely attractive. Why not an album of these joyous pieces?

J. STRAUSS B-90215

DELIRIEN WALTZER. (Josef Strauss) Two sides. Berlin
State Opera Orchestra conducted by Alois Melichar.
One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

One generally thinks first of Johann Strauss in connection with the waltz, and his various relatives who were engaged in the same occupation are more or less forgotten today. Indeed, it is not at all strange for record labels to attribute all



Strauss waltzes to Johann (that on the above record, however, is not guilty of that mistake). Outside of several odd examples—*Swallows from Austria* and *Music of the Spheres*—nothing much of Johann's younger brother, Josef, has been recorded. He was born in 1827—two years after his more famous brother—and began life as an engineer. But the lure of the waltz was too much for him, and like his relatives he soon succumbed. In 1853, while Johann was ill, he made his début conducting his brother's orchestra, and later, finding the business profitable and enjoyable, he formed his own orchestra. All this time he was busily writing waltzes of his own, and before he was finished he had 283 opus-numbers to his credit. His health was delicate, and when at Warsaw he was maltreated by some Russian officers because he refused to play for them in the middle of the night, he sustained injuries from which he died shortly after he returned to Vienna. Those of his waltzes that have been recorded are not so well turned as Johann's, but they have considerable charm and are surely not to be despised. The present one is attractive, and it is played with verve by Melichar and the always busy Berlin State Opera Orchestra. The recording has impressive volume.

WAGNER
C-68023D

{ **DIE MEISTERSINGER:** *Prelude*. Two sides. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Bruno Walter. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 19.

Columbia has surely spared neither expense nor trouble in an effort to give its customers a good recording of the unfailingly enjoyable *Prelude to Die Meistersinger*—one of the few compositions that can stand plenty of duplication. Counting this new recording of the work, the company now has three versions of the *Prelude* in its catalogue. Several years ago a three-side version by Bodanzky was issued. At the time it seemed pretty good, but now, with improved facilities for reproducing records, its faults are more clearly shown up. Then last Winter, in order to tie up with his American tour, Max von Schillings' version, also taking three sides, was issued. It, too, was pretty good, but by no means exemplary. This new recording by Walter, occupying only two sides, is easily the best of the three, and probably it is the best recording of the piece that has thus far been made. Walter's recent releases have been so fine that maybe more will be expected of this record than is fair and reasonable. At any rate, listening to it after hearing his recordings of the Strauss *Rosenkavalier Waltzes*, the Mozart *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* and Wagner's *Siegfried Idyl*—hearing it after these discs, it does seem a little disappointing. But just why it is hard to say. The interpretation is an excellent one, energetic, well planned and carefully executed. The playing of the unnamed orchestra is admirable; the tone is notably good. Listen, for example, to the strings and the woodwinds at the beginning of side two. And all this is nicely balanced and beautifully recorded; the whole *Prelude*, moreover, requires only two sides, so that there is only one break—not, by the way, a very felicitous one. So that there is really very little to find fault with. Probably, then, the slight feeling of disappointment to which this reviewer confesses proceeds more from the well known fact that a person, once given something good, invariably expects a good deal more the next time, than it does from any flaw in the disc.

DEBUSSY

C-G68020D

to

C-G68022D

NOCTURNES: (1) *Nuages*. (2) *Fêtes*. (3) *Sirènes*. Six sides.
Colonne Orchestra and Amicitia Choral Society conducted by
Gabriel Pierné.
Three 12-inch discs in album. Columbia Set No. 169. \$4.50.



This album commends itself chiefly because it includes the seldom-heard *Sirènes*. *Nuages* and *Fêtes*, of course, are thoroughly familiar to every concert-goer, and they have been recorded in numerous versions—more, perhaps, than has been necessary. But *Sirènes*, which employs a wordless chorus of sixteen women's voices in addition to the orchestra, is generally omitted at performances in the concert hall of the *Nocturnes*. And only one other recording of it—a wretched early electrical attempt—exists. Collectors will consequently be grateful to Columbia for issuing the three pieces in an album, even if it does involve some duplication. The interpretation of all three pieces is a sound one, restrained, well proportioned and nicely polished. The choral part in *Sirènes* is adequately sung by the Amicitia Choral Society. The recording, though not in any respect extraordinary, is satisfactory, and it is much better than that in most French Odeon discs, which have of late been spoiled by coarseness and harshness, resulting probably from over-amplification.

J. C. BACH**J. S. BACH**

V-7483

and

V-7484

SINFONIA IN B FLAT MAJOR. (Johann Christian Bach—
Arr. Stein) Three sides and
AIR. (J. S. Bach—Arr. Mahler) One side. New York Phil-
harmonic-Symphony Orchestra conducted by Willem Mengel-
berg. Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Johann Sebastian's tremendous genius has had one unfortunate result, and that is that it has kept some of his musical relatives further in the background than perhaps they deserve to be. At least that has been the case in recent years. There was a time, of course, when Johann Sebastian was not esteemed so highly, when there were other Bachs who were more favored by the musical public. But Johann Sebastian's fame has been growing so rapidly during the past century that others bearing the name of Bach have been relegated to the shelf. Johann Christian, eleventh son of Johann Sebastian, was fourteen years old when his father died in 1750. Much of his life was spent in Italy and England—from 1762 to his death in 1782 he lived in London, where he was appointed music-master to the Queen and the Royal Family—and because of this he is sometimes called the "Milanese" or "English" Bach.

These records were released in Europe a few months ago and a review of the imported pressings appeared in the September, 1931, issue of *Disques*, so that it will not be necessary to deal with them at any length here. The Sinfonia consists of three movements: a slow one between two lively ones. It reminds one somewhat of Mozart and Haydn, combining the former's grace and elegance with the latter's expansive heartiness. The lovely melody for the oboe in the second movement—here beautifully played by Bruno Labate—is particularly attractive. Recording and interpretation are wholly admirable, as they are in the familiar *Air* on the odd side.



SAINT-SAËNS
B-90214

SAMSON AND DELILAH: *Bacchanale*. Two sides. Lamoureux Orchestra conducted by Albert Wolff.
One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

Part of this music has been recorded by the Philadelphia Orchestra, but the piece was taken at such a breath-taking pace by Stokowski that nothing much could be made of it. Wolff takes things at a much slower time, and the music gains in effectiveness. There is nothing of great consequence in the *Bacchanale*, and it doesn't stand up at all well after more than a hearing or so, but at first blush it is not unpleasing. The Lamoureux Orchestra's performance is admirable, and the recording is loud and full.

**MANCINELLI
CATALANI**
C-GQX10492
IMPORTED

ERO E LEANDRO: *Suite*. (Mancinelli) One side and
LORELY: *Waltzer dei fiori*. (Catalani) One side. Milan Symphony Orchestra conducted by Lorenzo Molajoli.
One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Luigi Mancinelli is not unknown to record collectors, for selections from his *Cleopatra* and *Scene Veneziane* appeared over a year ago and were reviewed on page 170 of the July, 1930, issue of *Disques*. The suite given above is taken from his three-act opera, *Ero e Leandro*, the book of which was prepared by Boito. In 1896 it was performed as an oratorio, and the following year it was given in its original form at the Teatro Real, Madrid. The music in the suite is rather commonplace, but it is beautifully recorded and played by the Milan Symphony. The Catalani waltz is pleasing, and makes enjoyable listening.

BERLIOZ
C-DX291
IMPORTED

THE ROYAL HUNT AND STORM: *Descriptive Symphony*.
Two sides. Hallé Orchestra conducted by Hamilton Harty.
One 12-inch disc. \$2.

This effective music is an intermezzo that occurs in Act 3 of Berlioz' opera *Les Troyens*, the work which he hoped would be his masterpiece but which was greeted by the public with the same heartbreaking coolness with which *Benvenuto Cellini* was welcomed. The Overture to the second part of the work, *Les Troyens à Carthage*, is available on the odd side of Monteux's fine version of the *Benvenuto Cellini* Overture, released last Fall by Victor on its special list of foreign repressings. The intermezzo paints in tone the forest morning, naiads bathing, the approach and departure of a storm, nymphs, fauns and satyrs dancing around a tree which has been struck by lightning, and similar matters. It is impressive music, magnificently orchestrated, and Sir Hamilton Harty, an ardent admirer of Berlioz, was obviously the proper man to do the work. Under his revealing guidance, the Hallé Orchestra plays beautifully, and the recording is clear and vivid.

FALLA
C-17020D
to
C-17023D

EL AMOR BRUJO. Eight sides. Orquesta Bética de Cámara (Seville) conducted by Ernesto Halffter, with Conchita Velazquez (Mezzo-Soprano). Four 10-inch discs. \$1 each.

Reviewed, from the imported pressings, on page 116 of the May, 1931, issue.

RESPIGHI
C-LFX207
and
C-LFX208

IMPORTED

GLI UCCELLI: *Suite for Orchestra*. Four sides. Brussels
Royal Conservatory Orchestra conducted by Désiré Defauw.
Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.



Those who share Toscanini's boundless and apparently insatiable enthusiasm for the music of Ottorino Respighi will welcome these pleasantly inconsequential tinklings with delight. The *Birds* is divided into five sections which bear the following titles: Prelude; La Colomba (The Dove); La Gallina (The Hen); L'Usignuolo (The Nightingale); and Cucu (The Cuckoo). The work is scored for a small orchestra consisting of flute, oboe, two clarinets, two bassoons, two French horns, two trumpets, harp, celesta and strings. When the work was performed for the first time in America by Fritz Reiner with the Cincinnati Orchestra, the program notes described the suite thus:

I. PRELUDE. *Allegro Moderato*. The Prelude begins with a quaint and archaic theme, perpetually revolving around the same interval, given out by first violins and woodwinds, and repeated again and again in various registers and by various instrumental combinations. A number of interludes follow, which are drawn from the material of the following numbers, first the clucking hen in the first violins and oboe, then the cuckoo, by flute and bassoon above scurrying first violins. Fragments of the song of the nightingale are heard in pulsations of the flute. An *Allegretto* follows, drawn from no other part of the work, a graceful melody for oboe, supported by the other woodwinds. Clarinet chants the antiphon. Flutes continue it against a rising counter-melody by strings. The sprightly runs of the violins recur. It was over these that the cuckoo made his appearance before. The opening section is repeated and concludes the Prelude.

II. THE DOVE. *Andante espressivo*. Soft, muted strings and harp furnish a gentle background against which the oboe sings a tender melody. Occasional phrases of counter-song are given out by flute. A new section begins, with twittering little runs for the violins, and a broad melodic line for the 'cellos. Other woodwinds continue the melody, which culminates in a return of the original theme, sung now by first violins against quiet trembling of flutes. The melody continues in the strings, more and more richly scored. The end is very effectively scored: soft holding notes of first violins and oboe,—the twittering little runs of the violins, trills of the flute, a dulcet *glissando* of the harp, and the end upon a high and light string chord.

III. THE HEN. *Allegro vivace*. Respighi has already referred to this in the Prelude. Pianists know this clucking hen of Rameau. The excitement of the gallinaceous fowl is depicted with much wit in the first violins, aided at the exciting point by the oboe. Strings and woodwinds, with a soft trumpet accompaniment, continue. The first rhapsody of the hen is repeated in other keys, and leads to a more powerful enunciation for violins and clarinets. Oboe and clarinet sing alone. Fragments of melody are heard behind the persistent clucking. At the end the clarinet has all the clucking to itself, while the first violins trill. The string chords seem about to fade into silence when first violins, clarinets, and oboe unite for one final triumphant cluck, and then we hear what must be the crow of Chanticleer himself in answer.

IV. THE NIGHTINGALE. *Andante mosso*. A presentation to be set by the side of the famous gramophonic nightingale in Respighi's *Pines of Rome*. A soft note of horns and basses and sylvan swayings of 'cellos rises into the other strings; the flute is the bird pouring out its gentle heart. Other woodwinds answer with soft phrases. The whole is lovely in its simple yet potent evocation of the night. The piccolo echoes the trills and pulsations of the flute. After a descent, the 'cellos begin again, now more rapidly. This time a French horn takes the song, while the woodwinds sing their fragments above it. Harmonics rise in two solo violins, woodwinds trill softly, and the strings sink to the close.



V. THE CUCKOO. *Allegro*. Rapid runs of first violins and celesta lead to the first notes of the cuckoo, which appear in rapid succession in flute, horn, clarinet and flute. Thus the simple call is bandied about by the woodwinds. The persistent bird disappears for a bit, while the orchestra sings a more formal strain, which sinks into strings alone. The cuckoo puts in his appearance again, and is followed by a choring of woodwinds, then strings against clarinet and bassoon runs. A new section, *Allegro vivo*, already given in the Prelude, presents the obstinate fowl in the flute, against figured runs by first violins and trills by second violin. After a number of repetitions of this, the runs are given to celesta, and modifications of the cuckoo-theme to violins and violas. Now the 'cellos do the scampering, and the celesta answers to flute and horn. The composer exhibits his ingenuity next by setting the familiar call in woodwinds and some strings against an expressive melody of the first violins. Other strings add their voices to make a richer web. The scurrying returns to the first violins, the cuckoo-cry hastens, then retards. At last, *Allegro moderato*, comes the subject of the Prelude, which we now realize is built upon the germ of the cuckoo motive. At the last it is shouted in stentorian manner by the full orchestra.

The music is piquant and clever and occasionally amusing, and Respighi's well known skill at devising effective orchestrations serves him in good stead. The Brussels Orchestra, returning to phonographic work after a long absence, gives a sprightly performance; the recording is flawless. The records provide an amusing fifteen minutes.

RAVEL
C-LFX185
IMPORTED

ALBORADA DEL GRACIOSO. Two sides. Straram Orchestra conducted by Walther Straram. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

France, no less than England and Germany, has made salient contributions to the library of recorded orchestral music. Each of the major recording companies, in fact, has in France at least one orchestra upon which it can depend for records that will be outstanding for mechanical and artistic excellence. For example, Polydor has the Lamoureux Orchestra under Wolff; H. M. V. has the Paris Symphony Orchestra under Monteux and the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire under Coppola; Odeon has the Colonne Orchestra under Pierné; and Columbia has the Straram Orchestra. Perhaps none of these organizations is the equal of our Boston, Philharmonic-Symphony and Philadelphia Orchestras or of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw; but they have all done much toward making the collector's life a vastly more pleasant and enjoyable one. The Straram Orchestra, whatever it may sound like in concert, sounds remarkably fine on records, and its releases during the past year or two have maintained a high standard of excellence; its recorded performances of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe* Suite No. 2 may be mentioned as outstanding examples.

Ravel's *Alborada del Gracioso* was originally a piano piece, but as has been the case with so many of Ravel's piano pieces, he later arranged it for orchestra. In its orchestral form, it is an attractive and entertaining piece of music, revealing Ravel's vast skill and cunning in finding an effective orchestral equivalent for his pianoforte conceptions. We have had orchestral recordings of this work before—it is also available in the original pianoforte version on C-LF11, played by Marcelle Meyer,—but they are dull compared to this one, mainly because of the infinitely superior quality of the recording that marks the Straram Orchestra's version. The record is an admirable achievement for both the recorders and orchestra, and those who enjoy Ravel's music have a considerable treat in store for them.

CHAMBER MUSIC



BRAHMS

V-7487

to

V-7489

SONATA IN G MAJOR, Op. 78. Six sides. Adolf Busch (Violin) and Rudolf Serkin (Piano).

Three 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-121. \$6.50.

BEETHOVEN BACH

C-LFX105

to

C-LFX108

IMPORTED

SONATA IN F (*The Spring*), Op. 24. (Beethoven) Seven sides and

ADAGIO MA NON TROPPO. (Bach) One side. Joan Masia (Violin) and Blanche Selva (Piano).

Four 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Outside of Joseph Szegeti, there is no violinist now recording who more assiduously avoids the dull, hackneyed and commonplace than Adolf Busch. He confines his recording activities to what is generally accepted as great music, and such things as Drdla's *Souvenir*, Rimsky's *Song of India* and Dvorák's *Humoresque*—pieces which certain other eminent fiddlers apparently consider the only appropriate material available for phonographic purposes—are never encountered on the lists of his recordings. What the phonograph industry needs today is more artists of his calibre. There are plenty of musicians fully qualified to make satisfactory recordings of the favorite trifles for those who still want them; but the number of artists capable of playing the masterpieces as they should be played is necessarily somewhat limited. So that the argument that seeks to justify Kreisler's almost endless list of inconsequential odds and ends by claiming that he makes inferior music sound like superior music hardly seems very persuasive. Those who like such stuff are not excessively critical of how it is played, and those who don't like it can't be made to enjoy it very much no matter how skilfully it is presented.

With several Bach and Beethoven sonatas already to his credit, Busch now gives us Brahms' lovely Sonata in G Major, Op. 78, sometimes called the *Rain* Sonata, because, as Specht says, "the rhythm of the soft rain thrumming against the windows dominates the whole of the first and last movements." All the Brahms violin sonatas, including the first one, have been recorded by Columbia, and the G Major, in a version played by Toscha Seidel and Arthur Loesser, appeared only a few months ago. As was noted in the *Disques* review—page 176 of the June, 1931, issue,—the set was very disappointing. Seidel's interpretation left much to be desired, and the recording was somewhat below Columbia's usual high standard. Thus another version of the work—especially one so beautifully done as this—is worth having, and the fact that it is a duplication need disturb no one.

The Sonata in G Major was the first of Brahms' works in that form—the first to be published, that is, for he is said to have written others which he subsequently destroyed. Dating from 1878, it was written at Pörschach, where Brahms spent three summers and where he also wrote the Second Symphony, two



motets, Op. 74, the Violin Concerto, and two Rhapsodies for piano, Op. 79. The gracious Sonata in G Major contains some of Brahms' most attractive qualities. It is grave and tender and touched with melancholy, but it is by no means gloomy, and there is none of the bewilderment and dark despairs that fill Tchaikowsky's works. There is sorrow and pain in the work, but it is sorrow and pain seen in retrospect,—the gentle, not too poignant, and perhaps even oddly pleasant, pain that memory now and then evokes. In the Adagio—a lovely movement, with its two-part melody for the violin—there is a suggestion of a funeral march. "Is it," asks Walter Niemann, "the thought of the Rhine, and of Schumann's tragic death, which at this point casts its shadow over this movement, with its Schumannesque depth of feeling and simplicity?"

When Busch appeared in this country last Fall as soloist with the Philharmonic-Symphony and various other American orchestras, audiences and critics were impressed with his sincerity and honesty as an artist, as well as with his considerable gifts as a violinist. These qualities have been faithfully mirrored in his recordings, but perhaps never more vividly than in this set. His interpretation is an eloquent and well poised one, rich in feeling, deeply moving, but properly restrained. And technically it is more than satisfying. His accompanist, Rudolf Serkin, is somewhat modest but very competent. The violin tone is reproduced realistically, as indeed it is in most all of Busch's records. The set constitutes a distinguished addition to the library of recorded chamber music.

The Beethoven *Spring* Sonata hasn't the depth and earnestness of the Brahms. Here everything is light and graceful, sometimes so much so, indeed, that the work now and again borders on the superficial. The Sonata hardly represents Beethoven at his best. As in the brilliant *Kreutzer* Sonata, everything is on the surface and the main interest of the work, as Bekker puts it, "arises out of the skill with which the virtuoso element is combined with the sonata character." There are some charming passages in the work and it makes pleasant listening. But one doesn't feel impelled to return to it a second, a third and a fourth time, as one does with the Brahms. The performance is a smooth, finely polished one; and the two artists play together exceedingly well. The Bach excerpt on the odd side is on a more lofty level than the music that precedes it, and it is played skilfully and with dignity. The recording throughout the set is as it should be.

TANSMAN
C-LFX199
and
C-LFX200
IMPORTED

SUITE DIVERTISSEMENT for Piano, Violin, Viola and 'Cello. Four sides. Le Quatuor Belge à Clavier (Marcel Maas, Piano; Georges Lykoudi, Violin; Charles Froidart, Viola; Joseph Wetzels, 'Cello). Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Alexander Tansman, the young Polish composer who lives in Paris, has been receiving considerable attention during the past couple of years. He has obtained a fairly secure foothold in Europe, where his works are frequently played in the large musical centres, and in America he has been treated with more than ordinary civility, for his compositions have been made known here not only in various chamber music recitals but also in concerts given by several of our foremost orchestras. And even the phonograph audience, usually treated somewhat stingily when it comes to contemporary music, has been favored with a sample of Tansman's

music in the form of a little 10-inch H.M.V. record (reviewed in the July, 1931, *Disques*) containing five mazurkas played by the composer. Now a more important work, the Suite Divertissement for piano, violin, viola and 'cello, appears, giving collectors a better opportunity to judge the merits of this talented young composer.

The main impression one receives on hearing the work is that Tansman is trying at all costs to avoid dullness, yet without going to extreme lengths to accomplish his purpose. The combination of violin, viola, 'cello and piano is an effective one, permitting of more contrast and variety than could ordinarily be obtained by the regular string quartet and thus minimizing the danger of monotony.

The suite is in five brief movements: an Introduction and March; a Sarabande; a Scherzino (polka); a Nocturne; and a Finale. Those who like to guess at the influences which have helped shape a composer's work will have an enjoyable time with this suite, for it reveals several. Strawinsky's, as would be more or less expected, is there, and even Saint-Saëns' is present; a plaintive tune for the fiddle, in the Nocturne, bears a close resemblance to a violin passage in the *Danse Macabre*. The Introduction and March, with its sharp, jerky rhythms, is brilliant and engages the interest at once. The Sarabande, in direct contrast to the preceding movement, is quieter and more subdued; it is stately, though somewhat hesitating in its progress. The Scherzino is a jolly movement; a pawky tune, set going and twisted about in a diverting manner by plucked strings and tinkling piano, is the feature of this section. The Nocturne, beginning high up on the violin, starts mysteriously, but the mood is not sustained, and the impassioned middle section, with all the instruments vigorously contributing to the proceedings, is pointless and ugly. It is the least successful of the five movements. The Finale is crisp and effective. The whole suite shows, as someone remarked of another work of Tansman's, "a rare neatness of thought served by natural gifts of a high order and by the resources of a subtle and keen craftsmanship." It is skilfully played, though M. Maas' violin is now and then a bit piercing. The recording engineers, given a piece of music singularly well adapted for phonograph recording, have put the suite on discs with rare felicity.

PIANO



LISZT
B-90216

{ HUNGARIAN RHAPSODY NO. 2. Two sides. Alexander
Brailowsky (Piano). One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

One might as well resign oneself to seeing new recordings of this old warhorse appear from time to time; the most one can do is to hope that there will be decent intervals between the various versions. Brailowsky's interpretation is vigorous, and the recording, though somewhat noisy, is good.

**CHOPIN**

V-DA1209

to

V-DA1212

IMPORTED

SONATA IN B FLAT MINOR, Op. 58. Eight sides. Alfred Cortot (Piano). Four 10-inch discs in album. \$6.

Chopin has always been a phonographic favorite, a dependable quantity when the recorders wanted to venture into the realm of good music without taking too dangerous a risk. Even in the acoustical days, when the phonograph served mainly as a purveyor of popular music, Chopin was by no means neglected and received rather more than his proper share of attention. During the past year a minor flood of his works has issued from the companies, and it was a rare month that didn't bring to light at least one album. The festival is apparently still in full swing, for here is another major release: the Sonata in B Flat Minor, Op. 58.

This was recorded some years ago by Percy Grainger, but since then no other recordings of the work have appeared, so that this vastly superior version by Cortot can hardly be called a duplication. At any rate, it is a most welcome one. Published in June, 1845, the sonata has, according to the frequently quoted James Huneker, "more of that indefinable 'organic unity,' yet, withal, it is not so powerful, so pathos breeding or so compact of thematic interest as its forerunner." Huneker's vividly written estimate of the work has stood the ravages of time uncommonly well, and perhaps it may not be amiss to quote him still further.

The first page, to the chromatic chords of the sixth, promises much. There is a clear statement, a sound theme for developing purposes, the crisp march of chord progressions, and then—the edifice goes up in smoke. After wreathings and curlings of passage work, and on the rim of despair, we witness the exquisite budding of the melody in D. It is an aubade, a nocturne of the morn—if the contradictory phrase be allowed. There is morning freshness in its hue and scent, and, when it bursts, a parterre of roses. The close of the section is inimitable. All the more sorrow at what follows: wild disorder and the luxuriance called tropical. When B major is compassed we sigh, for it augurs us a return of delight. The ending is not that of a sonata, but a love lyric. For Chopin is not the cool breadth and marmoreal majesty of blank verse. He sonnets to perfection, but the epical air does not fill his nostrils.

Vivacious, charming, light as a harebell in the soft breeze is the Scherzo in E flat. It has a clear ring of the scherzo and harks back to Weber in its impersonal, amiable hurry. The largo is tranquilly beautiful, rich in its reverie, lovely in its tune. The trio is reserved and hypnotic. The last movement, with its brilliancy and force, is a favorite, but it lacks weight, and the entire sonata is, as Niecks writes, "affiliated, but not cognate."

Cortot plays superbly. Every note, in his interpretation, counts and is eloquent and full of meaning. The whole thing, in fact, is beautifully planned and proportioned. Admirable recording rounds out an exceedingly fine set.

GARRETA

C-2594D

SARDANA (*Popular Dance of Catalonia*). Two sides. Blanche Selva (Piano). One 10-inch disc. 75c.

This commonplace little dance ripples along rather pleasantly. Neither recording nor interpretation is startling; nor, for that matter, is the price.

OPERA



SULLIVAN
V-L24005
and
V-L24006

THE MIKADO: *Abridged Version*. (Gilbert-Sullivan) Four sides. Civic Light Opera Company and Orchestra conducted by Lewis Kroll. Two 10-inch long-playing discs. \$1.50 each.

That the long-playing process is susceptible to improvement and that, in consequence, some fine things can be expected from it in the future are pleasantly demonstrated in this abridged version of the *Mikado*. The manufacturers deserve praise for choosing the *Mikado* for such treatment, since it is the only one of the better known Gilbert and Sullivan operettas that has not yet been done full justice by the phonograph. The only available complete version—the early H.M.V.-Victor-D'Oyly Carte recording—was superbly presented, but the recording was pretty bad, and the person accustomed to modern reproduction has a difficult time of it negotiating the set nowadays without making generous allowances for the crude state of recording at the time the discs were made. Making allowances for this and that is an annoying business at best and diverts attention from the musical qualities of a record. The abridged version recently issued by Columbia, though satisfactorily recorded, was poorly interpreted. And the various single records of “gems” need not be taken into consideration. No genuine Gilbert and Sullivan fan is satisfied with such meagre offerings. There is, then, no altogether satisfactory recording of the *Mikado*.

Nor does this new long-playing set by the Civic Light Opera Company furnish an entirely satisfactory recording of the operetta, for it is not complete. Taking everything into consideration, however, it comes nearer to the ideal version than anything else now available.

The Civic Light Opera Company, probably the most competent organization of its type in America, has been playing light operas by Gilbert and Sullivan and various other composers at the Erlanger Theatre in New York for the past year. Singing a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta for the phonograph is an ungrateful task, since inevitably the results will be compared to the D'Oyly Carte recordings; and it is asking a great deal of another group of players to equal, let alone surpass, the English company's efforts. The Civic Light Opera Company, it can be said at once, does neither—but it is surely not a serious criticism of the company's work to say that it doesn't match the D'Oyly Carte's best. That would be a gigantic achievement, and this reviewer, for one, believes it impossible for anyone at the moment.

The following numbers are given in this abridged version: *Gentlemen of Japan*, *A Wand'ring Minstrel I*, *Comes a Train of Little Ladies*, *Three Little Maids from School*, *With Aspect Grand*, *He's Going to Marry Yum Yum*, *Braid the Raven Hair*, *The Moon and I*, *Miyasama*, *Daughter-in-law Elect*, *My Object All Sublime*, *The Flowers That Bloom in the Spring*, *Hearts Do Not Break*, *Willow*, *Tit-Willow*, *For He's Gone* and *Married Yum-Yum*, *With Joyous Shout*.



Headed by Hitzi Koyke, the Japanese prima donna, Frank Moulan, perhaps the outstanding star of the company, Vera Ross, Ethel Clark and Howard Marsh, the cast gathered together for this recording—the same as that which presented the work recently in New York, Philadelphia and other cities—is a well balanced one and maintains a high level of excellence. These people sing with fine gusto and no little skill. They lack the almost unbelievable polish and the amazing knack of presenting each number in what seems just the proper manner that distinguish the D'Oyly Carte recordings and make them one of the salient achievements of the phonograph. But they go about their work with a verve and an assurance that are refreshing; neither self-consciousness nor excessive and misplaced exaggeration—all too common faults—mars their rendition. Frank Moulan, always so amusing in person, is a little disappointing on the records, but perhaps that is because, having heard him in a whole series of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, the reviewer expected too much. On the other hand, the rest of the company, Hitzi Koyke, Vera Ross and Howard Marsh in particular, give better performances than would be expected. The chorus is lively and competent, the orchestra small but adequate. The recording is not entirely free from the faults that have thus far made the long-playing process unsatisfactory, but it is much better than the first long-playing examples. Above all, it is extremely clear, so that the all-important words are not at all difficult to understand. These discs, in brief, can be recommended.

**THOMAS
BIANCHINI**
V-7485

MIGNON: *Io son Titania (Polonaise)*. (Thomas) One side and
NINNA-NANNA. (Bianchini) One side. Toti Dal Monte (Soprano) with La Scala Orchestra conducted by Carlo Sabajno. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

The charming *Mignon* Polonaise comes off delightfully in this recording. Toti Dal Monte's lovely voice has seldom been heard to better advantage, and the accompaniment by the Scala Orchestra under Sabajno is fresh and sparkling . . . Of *Ninna-Nanna* scarcely as much can be said, though the rendition is beyond cavil. The song itself is dull. Otherwise the record is a fine one.

CAVALLI
C-DF135
IMPORTED

ERCOLE AMANTE: *Scene du sommeil*. One side and
GIASONE: *Invocation de medee*. One side. Madeleine Leymo (Soprano) with orchestra conducted by Elie Cohen. One 10-inch disc. \$1.

Pietro Francesco Cavalli was born, at Crema, in 1602 and died in Venice in 1676. He wrote a great number of operas for the Venice theatres (there were five of them at the time), and in 1660, his fame having spread abroad, he was called to Paris for the marriage of Louis XIV. Two years later he returned to the French city and brought out his *Ercole amante*. Cavalli's influence was widespread, and he is said to have taken up opera where Monteverdi left it. This disc will be of special interest to those familiar with Volume II of the *Columbia History of Music*, for it is mentioned in the text. As an example of early opera, the disc is excellent. The selections are notably melodious, and there are effective orchestral accompaniments. The arrangements used are those of the eminent French music critic, Henri Prunières. The recording is beyond cavil.

CHORAL



BACH

V-11178

to

V-11182

CANTATA NO. 4 (*Christ Lag in Todesbanden*). Complete on six sides and

CANTATA NO. 140 (*Wachet Auf, Ruft Uns die Stimme*). Excerpts on four sides. Orfeo Catalá of Barcelona conducted by Louis Millet.

Five 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-120. \$7.50.

Cantata No. 4 was reviewed in the issue of November, 1931, page 415, where a note will be found regarding the place of the cantata in the Lutheran service. This cantata, recorded completely, is now released on the domestic list, with excerpts from Cantata No. 140.

It is only when Easter occurs very early that there can be twenty-seven Sundays after Trinity. Such was the case twice during Bach's incumbency at Leipzig, in 1731 and 1742. Cantata No. 140 (*Sleepers Wake!*) was written for the twenty-seventh Sunday after Trinity (the Sunday Next Before Advent), but for what year it seems impossible definitely to establish. Spitta says 1731, and is followed by Schweitzer and Parry. Rust says 1742, but Terry, Hannam, and Whitaker prefer to leave the matter open.

In the Lutheran service, the Gospel for the day was the "Parable of the Ten Virgins" (St. Matt. 25:1-13), so the cantata had to be upon this subject. For the backbone of his text Bach chose Philip Nicolai's fine hymn of three stanzas—*Wachet Auf, Ruft Uns die Stimme*. Nicolai wrote the hymn in 1597 while he was pastor at Unna in Westphalia, during the ravages of a terrible pestilence. Constantly looking into the eyes of death, the author thought more and more of God and Eternal Life, and the ecstatic joy expressed in this poem was the result. The magnificent chorale melody always associated with the hymn is also generally ascribed to Nicolai, but Lawrence Gilman has discovered that it appeared in a collection published in 1591, eight years before the publication of Nicolai's hymn.

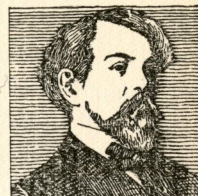
There are seven numbers in Bach's cantata, of which only three are recorded (Nos. 1, 4, and 7). It is laid out as follows: 1. Chorus; 2. Recitative—tenor; 3. Duet—soprano and bass; 4. Chorale—tenor; 5. Recitative—bass; 6. Duet—soprano and bass; 7. Chorale. The numbers recorded are the three stanzas of Nicolai's hymn. The omitted numbers (2, 3, 5, and 6) are either dramatic or meditative, the texts being supplied supposedly by Picander.

In his cantatas, Bach never reached greater heights than in this splendid work. There is about it a sweeping and soaring magnificence which beggars all attempts at description. The music is in the highest degree expressive of the text which it so sumptuously clothes. Whether it is the opening chorus with its antiphonal march theme, the chorale for tenors in unison with interludes for strings, later transcribed for organ as a chorale-prelude, or the majestic closing chorale with its incredibly rich harmonization, all is alike wonderful. Parry calls the work one of exceptional warmth and beauty, and suggests that the reason for it is "that the poem was

—New Issues—
Columbia
Masterworks*

DEBUSSY: NOCTURNES: NUAGES; FÊTES; SIRÈNES.

This great impressionist work is a welcome addition to the mounting list of modern masterpieces in the Columbia Masterworks library. It is one of the musical milestones, marking the attainment by Debussy of a subtlety of expression which to that time no one had successfully attempted—the passing of clouds in the sky, the dancing of waves lit by the sun, the ripple of water on the shore—there is a gay festival procession in cloudland as it approaches, passes and recedes—there is the haunting far-away song of the sirens from their enchanted isle—it is all inexpressibly charming. The reading of the score by M. Pierné and his celebrated orchestra is exemplary, exhibiting the niceties of detail without which the work loses much of its elusive attraction.



Masterworks Set No. 169

Debussy: Nocturnes: Nuages; Fêtes; Sirènes. Gabriel Pierné and Orchestra of the Concerts Colonne, Paris. In Six Parts, on Three Twelve-Inch Records. \$4.50 with Album.

WAGNER: DIE MEISTERSINGER: OVERTURE. There have been many calls for a really adequate two-part recording of the Meistersinger Overture. It is in response that we issue this most satisfying rendition by Bruno Walter of the opening of Wagner's monumental lyric comedy, by many considered the greatest musical work ever written for the stage. Meistersinger, commenced in Wagner's youth, was completed after twenty years, during much of which time the score was in abeyance, and presents many of the most virile and mature manifestations of Wagner's genius. The famous overture is built up of a number of the principal motifs of the opera.

Wagner: Die Meistersinger: Overture. Bruno Walter and Symphony Orchestra. In Two Parts, on One Twelve-Inch Record No. 68023-D. \$2.00.

DE FALLA: EL AMOR BRUJO (LOVE, THE MAGICIAN) BALLET. Interest in Manuel de Falla's very unusual work, El Amor Brujo, instead of declining on familiarity, grows with the years. Here we have it in the most authentic version it is possible to procure—recorded in Seville, heart of old Spain, conducted by Falla's most distinguished pupil, Ernesto Halffter-Escriche, the vocal parts sung by a typical and eminent Spanish singer, Conchita Velazquez. For "atmosphere" nothing could exceed this reproduction. El Amor Brujo (Love, the Magician) came from Falla's pen about 1915 as a ballet in one act, the scenario based on one of the innumerable gypsy tales of Andalusia. The wild but fascinatingly melodious music stamped it at once to the connoisseur as one of the authentic modern works of genius.

De Falla: El Amor Brujo (Love, the Magician) Ballet. Ernesto Halffter and Orquesta Belica de Camara (Seville) with Conchita Velazquez, Mezzo-Soprano. In Eight Parts, on Four Ten-Inch Records, Nos. 17020-D to 17023-D, Each, \$1.00.



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"Magic Notes"

congenial and suggestive, that the subject of the bridegroom and the Virgins appealed to Bach's imagination in the symbolical sense of its application to humanity at large, and that the chorale tune itself was exceptionally impressive."



The recording is spacious and sonorous, and generally on a very high plane. The break in the middle of a phrase in the first chorus is annoying, and there is a very abrupt ending; otherwise the mechanical aspects of the recording are first rate.

HERBERT BOYCE SATCHER

V-DB1569

to

V-DB1572

IMPORTED

SISTINE CHAPEL CHOIR ALBUM: (1) *Tu es Petrus*. (Perosi) (2) *Benedictus*. (Perosi) (3) *Motetto—Sicut Cervus*. (Palestrina) (4) *Ave Maria*. (Arcadelt) (5) *Offertorium—Super Flumina*. (Palestrina) (6) *Improperia*. (Palestrina) (7) *Tenebrae*. (Vittoria) (8) *Introitus*. (Anerio) Eight sides. Choir of the Sistine Chapel, Rome, under the direction of Lorenzo Perosi and conducted by Antonio Rella. Four 12-inch discs in album. \$8.

The history of the Sistine Chapel Choir is much too long to give in any detail here, and besides a leaflet in the album sets forth the necessary facts satisfactorily. An excellent article on the organization can be found in Grove's. It begins thus: "A collegiate body, consisting of thirty-two choral chaplains, domiciled—though not in any special buildings of their own—at Rome, where for many centuries they have enjoyed the exclusive privilege of singing at all those solemn services and ecclesiastical functions in which the Pope officiates in person." Many prominent church musicians have been intimately associated with the choir, among whom might be mentioned: St. Gregory, Pope Sixtus V, Beda, Aretino, Festa, Morales, Mell, Palestrina, Vittoria, Arcadelt, Anerio, Giovannelli, Zoilo, Allegri, Vitali and Perosi. These names sufficiently justify the album annotator's claim that "for hundreds of years its [the choir's] history has been the history of Roman Church music."

The present director, Mgr. Lorenzo Perosi, who is represented in the album with two of his own compositions, has held this position since 1898, when the appointment was made tenable for life. His assistant, Mgr. Antonio Rella, has been associated with Mgr. Perosi for a number of years, and both these musicians have approved the records included in the album. The selections recorded were chosen with the purpose of giving representative selections of polyphonic church music of different periods. The two selections by Mgr. Perosi, *Tu es Petrus* and *Benedictus*, are not enough to allow one to form a definite judgment of his status as a composer, but they are extremely impressive. The other selections are all very beautiful, especially the lovely *Improperia* and the expressive *Ave Maria*.

The singing of the choir is always superb, revealing infinite care and skill in the training of the organization, and the whole effect is one of incomparable dignity and sincerity. These records—to resort to a trite, but in this case amply warranted, phrase—must be heard to be appreciated. Words are hardly adequate to the task of suggesting the profound impression of earnestness and simplicity the choir leaves upon the hearer. The recording, in the main, is excellent. The words of the selections recorded are included in the note in the album leaflet.

RCA Victor Announces New Musical Masterpieces

Sonata in G Major (Opus 78) for Violin and Piano by Johannes Brahms. Played by Adolf Busch and Rudolf Serkin on three double-faced 12-inch Victor Records, Nos. 7487-7489 . . . and in automatic sequence Nos. 7490-7492. In Album M-121 with explanatory booklet. List price, \$6.50.

This Sonata, often referred to as the "Rain Sonata," due to its close relation to the composer's song, *Regenlied*, is said to have gained more friends for Brahms than any other of his compositions. Its tender contemplative beauty is instantly appealing . . . the intimate interchange of themes between the instruments will prove a constant joy to follow. You will want this Sonata, which introduces Adolf Busch as a Victor artist, in the Brahms section of your record library.

Cantatas Nos. 4 and 140 by Johann Sebastian Bach. Performed by Orféo Catalá of Barcelona on five double-faced 12-inch Victor Records Nos. 11178-11182 . . . and in automatic sequence Nos. 11183-11187. In Album M-120 with explanatory booklet. List price, \$7.50.

Here is an album that will be of unusual interest to the lover of Bach. Cantata No. 4, *Christ Lay in Death's Dark Prison*, is complete on the first three records in the album. Excerpts from Cantata No. 140, *Sleepers Wake!* are recorded on the last two discs. The artists are a famous choral group of Barcelona, and the recordings were made at an actual performance. You will find on these discs the original music from which some of your "pet" orchestrations have been made.

Red Seal Records

De Glory Road (Jacques Wolfe) and *Edward* (Karl Loewe). Sung, with piano accompaniment, by Lawrence Tibbett on Victor Record No. 7486. List price, \$2.00.

Sinfonia in B Flat Major (Johann Christian Bach) and

Air for the G String (Johann Sebastian Bach). Played by the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of New York conducted by Willem Mengelberg on Victor Records Nos. 7483-7484. List price, \$2.00 each.

Mignon-Lo son Titania (Thomas) and *Ninna-Nanna* (Bianchini). Sung, with orchestral accompaniment, by Toti Dal Monte on Victor Record No. 7485. List price, \$2.00.

The Prayer Perfect (Oley Speaks) and *Far Apart* (Schneider). Sung with organ and piano accompaniment respectively, on Victor Record No. 1554. List price, \$1.50.



R C A VICTOR COMPANY, Inc.
Camden, New Jersey

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JOHNSON
V-36047

- (a) ST. JAMES INFIRMARY BLUES. (b) EASTMAN.
(Arr. Johnson) One side and
WATER BOY. (Arr. Johnson) One side. Hall Johnson Negro
Choir conducted by Hall Johnson.
One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.



This record ought to go in the best-selling division at once. The Hall Johnson Negro Choir is already widely known through its work in "Green Pastures" and its appearances at the open-air concerts of the Philadelphia and Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestras last Summer. Somewhat over a year ago the choir brought out an excellent record of various spirituals, and it was easily one of the finest discs of its type that had ever been issued. This new one is even better than the other. The *St. James Infirmary Blues*, one of the favorite numbers in the choir's repertoire, reveals in this effective arrangement attractive qualities that were entirely lacking when the piece was at the height of its popularity a few years ago. *Eastman*, an extremely lively little piece, fills out the record-side. *Water Boy*, on the reverse, is magnificently rendered; it is hard to listen to the choir's interpretation of this piece without being moved. The recording is unusually fine.

VOCAL



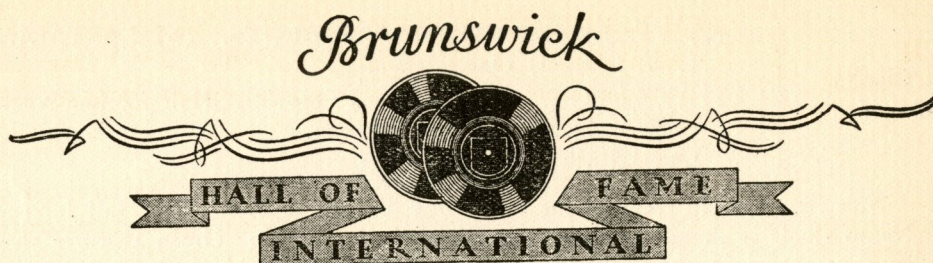
LOEWE
V-DA1180
IMPORTED

- DER HEILIGE FRANZISKUS. One side and
SÜSSES BEGRÄBNIS. One side. Sigrid Onegin (Contralto)
with piano accompaniments by Franz Rupp and Clemens Schmal-
stich. One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

LOEWE
WOLFE
V-7486

- EDWARD. (Loewe) One side and
DE GLORY ROAD. (Clement Wood-Jacques Wolfe) One side.
Lawrence Tibbett (Baritone) with piano accompaniment by
Stewart Wille. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Carl Loewe (1798-1896), the great writer of ballads, has thus far been but meagrely represented in the catalogues, so that the three pieces recorded above will be welcomed by admirers of his works. *Der heilige Franziskus*, having for its subject a cricket's chirping in the twilight and its philosophical effect upon St. Francis, is beautifully sung by Sigrid Onegin, and *Süsses Begräbnis*, based on a poem by Rückert, is likewise rendered with impressive effect. The piano accompaniments by Franz Rupp and Clemens Schmalstich are skilfully done. . . . *Edward* is rendered with a great deal of drama by Tibbett, whose control over his magnificent voice is amazing. On the reverse side is *De Glory Road* by Clement Wood and Jacques Wood. Some may enjoy it; to this reviewer it seems like a vast amount of excitement over nothing. The piano accompaniments in both pieces are capably played by Stewart Wille, and the recording is finely achieved.



Recent Outstanding Recordings

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| 90213 | { | WEINBERGER —SCHWANDA, DER DUDELSACKPFEIFER
Ich bin der Schwanda and Wie kann
ich den vergessen was mein Liebstes war
THEODOR SCHEIDL , Baritone | } | Recorded in Europe
PRICE \$1.50 |
| 90214 | { | SAINT-SAËNS —SAMSON AND DELILAH—Bacchanale
(Act III)
LAMOUREUX ORCHESTRA, PARIS
ALBERT WOLFF, Conductor | } | Recorded in Europe
PRICE \$1.50 |
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THE STATE OPERA ORCHESTRA, BERLIN
ALOIS MELICHAR, Conductor | } | Recorded in Europe
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| 90216 | { | LISZT —HUNGARIAN RHAPSODY NO. 2
ALEXANDER BRAILOWSKY , Piano | } | Recorded in Europe
PRICE \$1.50 |
| 85008 | { | BRAHMS —MINNELIED—Op. 71, No. 5 and
STÄNDCHEN—Op. 106, No. 1
HEINRICH SCHLUSNUS , Baritone | } | Recorded in Europe
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BACH

C-G4062M

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O HEIL'GER GEIST, KEHR'BEI UNS EIN. One side.
Lotte Lehmann (Soprano) with organ accompaniment by Paul
Mania. One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.



**SPEAKS
SCHNEIDER**

V-1554

THE PRAYER PERFECT. (Oley Speaks) One side and
FAR APART. (Edwin Schneider) One side. John McCormack
(Tenor) with organ and piano accompaniments.
One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

**BAUM-
GARTNER
NESSLER**

C-G9048M

NOCH SIND DIE TAGE DER ROSEN. (Baumgartner)
One side and
DER TROMPETER VON SAKKINGEN: *Behüt dich Gott,
es war' Zu schön gewesen.* (Nessler) One side. Richard Tau-
ber (Tenor) with orchestra conducted by Ernst Hauke.
One 12-inch disc. \$2.

The Lotte Lehmann disc, setting forth two Bach chorales, is beautifully sung and adequately recorded. The organ accompaniment is well played. . . . Oley Speaks, the composer of the *Prayer Perfect*, was born in Canal Winchester, Ohio, in 1876. From 1898 to 1901 he was baritone soloist of the Church of the Divine Paternity in New York, and from 1901 to 1906 he held a similar appointment at St. Thomas's P. E. Church. His songs, which have been on the programs of many eminent singers, number about one hundred. The one given here can scarcely be called distinguished, but it is well sung by McCormack. The accompaniment is for an organ and string quintet, but the latter is scarcely audible. . . . The composer of *Far Apart* is McCormack's accompanist, Edwin Schneider. It is an attractive song and receives a perfect rendition. . . . The Tauber selections are only fair, but they can be recommended to Tauber admirers.

**BRAHMS
WOLF**

DIE MAINACHT. (Brahms) One side and
(a) WEYLAS GESANG. (b) ANAKREON'S GRAB. (Wolf)
One side. Sidney Biden (Baritone) with piano accompaniment.
One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

KERNOCHAN

(a) YOU'LL LOVE ME YET. (b) PORTRAIT. One side
and
SUMMER DAWN. One side. Sidney Biden (Baritone) with
piano accompaniment. One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

These discs, made by the Judson Radio Program Corporation (no longer in existence) and distributed by the Galaxy Music Corporation, New York, will be welcomed by the collector of vocal records. They are expressively sung by Sidney Biden, and the piano accompaniments—by A. Walter Kramer for the Brahms and Celius Dougherty for the Wolf and Kernochan songs—are well played and recorded. The reproduction is unusually good. The playing surface of these records begins on the inner edge instead, as is usually the case, on the outer edge. They can, however, be played on any machine.

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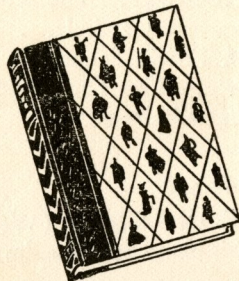
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RIVER, STAY 'WAY FROM MY DOOR. (Woods) One side and
ROCKIN' CHAIR. (Carmichael) One side. Paul Robeson (Bass) wih orchestra. One 10-inch disc. 75c.



Paul Robeson is always a pleasure to listen to, and he sings these two popular tunes beautifully. Both numbers are well known to those who listen to the radio, but it is safe to say that they have never been so attractively presented as they are here. The recording is good and the orchestral accompaniments satisfactory.

VOLONCELLO

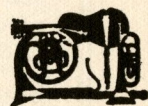


**C. P. E. BACH
D'HERVELOIS**
C-50314D

CONCERTO IN A MAJOR (No. 3): *Largo mesto*. (C. P. E. Bach) One side and
PLAINTE. (de Caix d'Hervelois) One side. Maurice Maréchal (Violoncello) with piano accompaniment. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

The movement from Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's 'Cello Concerto No. 3 is most welcome. So far as this reviewer can ascertain, this seems to be the first time he has been represented on records. One of the most gifted of Johann Sebastian's sons, he was for many years in the employ of Frederick the Great, noted, or perhaps notorious, for his flute-playing. Though his great father has perhaps made Carl Philipp Emmanuel's merits seem less significant than they actually were, some sizeable names are included among his admirers: those of Haydn, Mozart, Dr. Burney and Wanda Landowska, to mention a few. The phonograph companies, rumored to be seeking unhackneyed recording material, might find it profitable to investigate his works . . . The composer of the *Plainte* is unknown to us, nor does the piece recorded here arouse any overwhelming desire to hear more. Maréchal plays both selections skilfully, and the recording is excellent.

MISCELLANEOUS



GANDHI
C-2069M

MAHATMA GANDHI: *His Spiritual Message*. Two sides.
Mahatma Gandhi. One 10-inch disc. \$1.

Mahatma Gandhi and his activities are so familiar to everyone that nothing further need be added here. In this record, speaking in commendably simple English, he gives what the label calls his spiritual message. It is delivered with great sincerity and earnestness, but what he says isn't very new or startling. Many will be curious to know what the voice of the man who has so stirred the world sounds like, and this admirably recorded disc will satisfy that curiosity quite effectively.

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CORRESPONDENCE



From the "Sage of Roxbury" to the
Seer of Porkopolis

Editor, *Disques*:

I must confess that I do not quite understand what the divagations of Mr. Mitchell, of Gunman City, come down to after the wise-cracks have been boiled away. I take it, however, that he is displeased with me and immensely pleased with himself. That's a subjective phenomenon, and a rather common one; let it take its course. He does, however, touch upon a few general principles; here, at least, I can join issue with him.

Imprimis: he had better not be too sure about the matter of programme—versus absolute—music. That he is not even well-informed upon my attitude none knows better than you, Monsieur Editor, as you have in hand for early publication an article in which I show these to be not irreconcilable antagonists but aspects of a larger unity. And lest Mr. Mitchell be too cocksure about the attitude of contemporary composers, let me refer him to an article by none other than Constant Lambert, the young English composer who has made such good use of jazz rhythms in his "Rio Grande"; in this article, written for the British Broadcasting Company, Mr. Lambert actually defends composers with a programme, and tries to show that programmatic writing brings out the best in contemporary composers of the right little, tight little isle.

Second: Mr. Mitchell can fairly see me shrink when he accuses me of being "out of date," and suggests that I tip off my friends Mencken and Gershwin on the latest developments in music. Would it surprise Mr. Mitchell to learn that I am not in the slightest degree interested in keeping "up with the times," and that I consider such a concept as "keeping up with the times" an anti-artistic, anti-aesthetic notion? The business of the artist is to produce good work, and when he happens to be a genius he is likely to knock "the times" out of joint. He knows, this artist, that art is a function of the imagination, not of the calendar, and that real values in art depend, not upon the day of the year, or the year of the century, but upon the individual writing his best in the timeless spaces of what we call his inspiration.

"The times," indeed! Next thing we'll be hearing is that Kid Mitchell believes in labels, too, and in the *a priori* magic of *isms*.

Tertio: "comically excited gesturing" about Daniel Gregory Mason. I said that Mr. Mason, on his own evidence, is guilty of racial prejudice in art, and that Nordics have commented upon this unpleasant aspect of his musical criticism. Mason's definition of musical Americanism is narrow. His practise of it, as art, is of little significance. His diatribes against jazz, when compared with what he praises in our contemporary music as its antidote, lose almost all force.

Our music, despite its friends and foes, will grow up. So will Mr. C. H. Mitchell, of Chicago, Ill.

ISAAC GOLDBERG

Roxbury (Boston), Mass.

Music and the Child

Editor, *Disques*:

It is apparent that the author of "Listen My Children" in the February issue of your magazine is not aware of the great advances that have been made in music education for children, and as it is the province of the Music Committee of the Child Study Association to know about the current trends in music education, both in homes and in grade schools as well as in music schools, I should like to correct some of the impressions conveyed in Miss Nichol's article.

The first part of the article suggests, though not in so many words, that we expose children to the classics in music at an early age and that enjoyment will come with listening. It has been proven that a group of children will learn more from playing a folk tune on primitive instruments than from hearing a symphony orchestra play any great composition. The musical background of the child must be developed by active participation in singing, rhythmic response and instrumental performance, and the latter no longer means hours of meaningless practice at an art instrument far beyond the child's power to play.

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Correspondence (Continued)

home, but if the author does not realize what the record companies have done for children, may I suggest a glance at the Victor Company's educational catalogue? A part of the work of the Music Committee is reviewing and classifying records suitable for children and the phonograph section of our pamphlet "Music and the Child," published in 1931, contains 32 pages, without any attempt to list foreign recordings.

As to albums, if the companies spent a great deal of money on them, the children would not gain therefrom as they would undoubtedly be unable to lift the albums. The cost of the pictured end papers and illustrated pamphlets might well be spent by their parents in buying more records and letting music speak for itself.

As a matter of fact the Child Study Association has compiled three albums of children's records which are being sold by the Gramophone Shop in New York. The reason for the album is to eliminate the necessity of selection on the part of relatives and friends who buy records for gifts, and to make the gift seem a more substantial one. The fact that these albums have proven very popular shows the increasing interest in records for children.

I am sending you, under separate cover, a copy of "Music and the Child," and I trust that it will explain more fully why I have taken the liberty of encroaching on your time with this letter. Your publication is so up to date on all other matters that I feel sure you will be interested in the latest developments in music education, especially where they make use of the phonograph.

HELEN L. RAU (Mrs. Henry Rau, Jr.)

Chairman, Music Committee

Child Study Association of America

New York, N. Y.

Record Loan System

Editor, *Disques*:

I should like to comment on a problem in the distributing and merchandizing of records of much concern to the collector in the smaller towns. This is the difficulty of obtaining an audition of records prior to purchase. It is obviously impossible for smaller dealers to carry large inventories and there is apparently no lending agreement between wholesale and retail dealer for audition purposes.

The collector, therefore, must buy records as Paddy bought his pig,—in the poke. For record enthusiasts so handicapped, *Disques* is indeed a boon, acting in good faith, as an auditory judge, most honorable and just. However, taste in music is a highly individual quality; as one of your contributors states, there is no "gold standard in music."

This letter is therefore a plea for some system of loan reciprocity between wholesale and retail dealer for the benefit of the customer. Lacking this the sale of records, at this time of critical buying, must inevitably be curtailed in the smaller towns.

L. MARY MOENCH

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Giesecking Records

Editor, *Disques*:

About two years ago I wished to get some Giesecking records, and on inquiring, I found that he had made several for Homocord. I bought three of them, one of which contained the two Arabesques of Debussy. (No. 4-8936.) I was very much disappointed in them, for they were away behind the standards of piano recording at the time. When I looked at the Columbia advertisement in February *Disques*, I decided to throw my record out and get the new one, but on reading the review, I have come to the conclusion that the Homocord record had been repressed with the intention of selling it on the reputation of the Beethoven Sonata. If that is the case, I must congratulate Columbia on issuing the best and by far the worst piano recordings of the year by the same artist and a month apart.

I sometimes think that records are issued without anyone bothering to listen to them. I have another piano record which is beautifully done on the first side, while the second sounds as if a plow had been used as the cutting stylus. I decided to replace it, thinking it was a defective pressing, but found that every copy was the same. How do such things happen?

However, I find it easier to write a letter containing complaints. If I wrote on my pleasant experiences with records and recordings, it would take much more time than I can spare.

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BOOKS

GIUSEPPE VERDI: *His Life and His Works*. By Francis Toye. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$6.

Though in some quarters it is regarded as an indication of wisdom and lofty taste to sneer at Verdi, the musical world at large still cherishes his works. Enormously popular, they figure prominently in the repertoire of every opera company of any consequence, and in the large centres no season passes without plenty of performances of his operas taking place. Crying down Verdi must therefore be a pretty discouraging business. He sheds adverse criticism as easily as a duck's back does water. Apparently something more than superior sneers is needed to put him in his place, or rather what some hold to be his place.

Recently he has received considerable attention from the critics and the biographers. Some months ago an excellent little volume called "Verdi," by Ferruccio Bonavia, appeared, and more recently we have had this larger work by Francis Toye. (A two-volume biography by Carlo Gatti, called by Mr. Toye "the most comprehensive biography of Verdi that has yet appeared," has just been issued, but the reviewer has not had an opportunity to examine it.) Bonavia's study is brief but careful and illuminating and, above all, fair; it is addressed, however, principally to musicians and doesn't cover the vast amount of ground that Mr. Toye's more elaborate work does. Planned on a much larger scale, his book contains a great deal of new material, and it is admirably arranged and assorted.

The first half of the book is given over to biographical details. As is well known, Verdi's life was lacking in outward drama and spectacular events, so that reading an account of it is not particularly exciting. But Mr. Toye tells the story calmly and accurately and without any attempt to exaggerate trivial incidents merely to inject interest into the account. The figure that emerges may not be so fascinating and arresting as that which emerges from Newman's "Wagner as Man and Artist," for example, but Verdi as a man had characteristics that command the utmost respect, and Mr. Toye sets them forth revealingly. The second section deals with the musical compositions. Mr.

Toye's work here is excellent; his judgments are judicious and well considered, showing a long familiarity with and close study of the music. He outlines the plots of the operas, indicates their sources, names the authors and qualities of the librettos, analyzes and evaluates the music. It is all done with a skill, an insight and an assurance that arouse admiration, and the book is cordially recommended.

MADRIGAL SINGING: *A Few Remarks on the Study of Madrigal Music with an explanation of the Modes and a Note on their Relation to Polyphony*. By Ch. Kennedy Scott. London: Oxford University Press. \$3.25.

This beautifully printed volume, first published in 1907 and revised and re-issued last year, is primarily addressed to choral societies, and more particularly to those organizations which include madrigals in their repertoire. "It is quite impossible," says Mr. Scott, "to do thorough work in the hour or so every week which is all that most Choral Societies can give to rehearsal. Rough-and-ready methods have to be adopted. Much that should be explained has to be passed over for want of time. The expression is apt to be superficial, stuck on by the conductor, and this sticking on process (to the irritation of both choir and conductor) seems never-ending.

"In the matter of expression the choir should at least be able to meet the conductor half-way. To a large extent they should be *prepared* for what is wanted of them; but ordinary rehearsal is not sufficient for this. It must be done by *private study*, enthusiastically undertaken by the singers."

Mr. Scott assigns himself the task of explaining madrigal singing, and his volume is clearly written and full of useful information. Those who are interested in madrigals, even if they do not expect to sing them, will find his remarks informative. In the rear are appendixes containing a note on the modal system, together with a table of the church modes, a note on ayres, and a list of English madrigal writers and their principal works. The volume is distributed in this country by Carl Fischer, Inc.

